

909
K267
gro

UC-NRLF



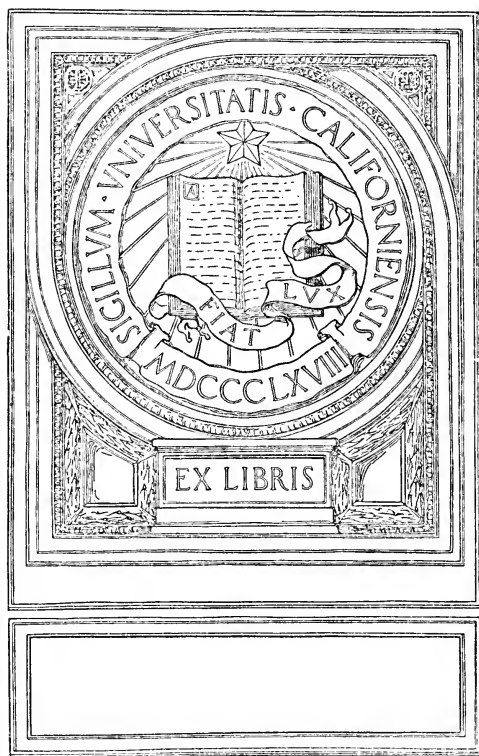
\$B 112 326

A Group of Comedians

BY
WILLIAM L. KEESE

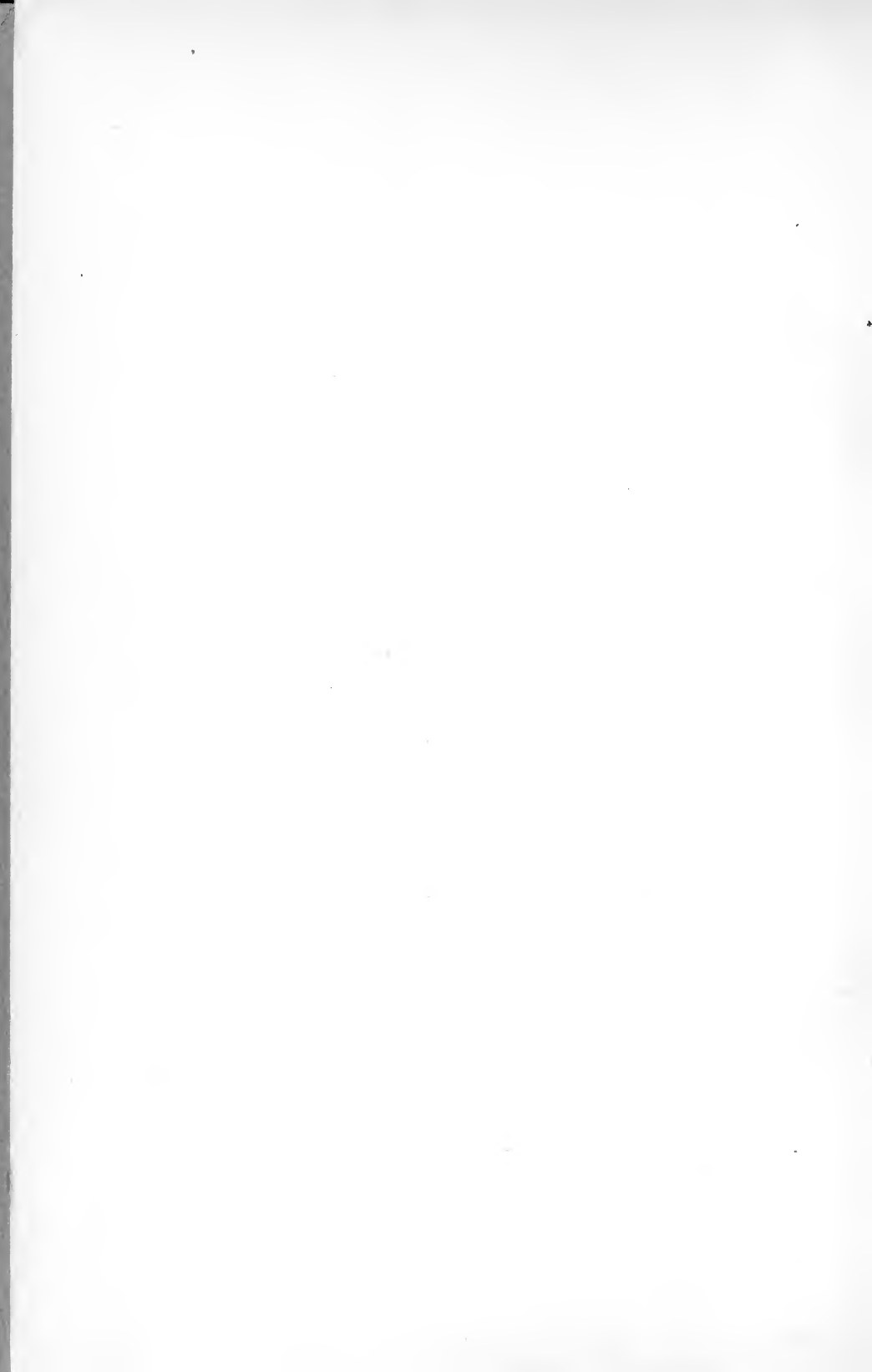


Publications of The Dunlap Society. New Series No. 15.
New York, 1901.



This is one of an edition of two hundred and sixty-five copies printed from type for the Dunlap Society in the month of December, 1901.

Theo. L. De Vinne & Co.



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation



HENRY PLACIDE.

A
GROUP OF COMEDIANS

BY
WILLIAM L. ^{imm}KEESE
"



NEW YORK
THE DUNLAP SOCIETY

1901

909
K267
gro



Copyright by
WILLIAM L KEESE
1901

PREFACE

THE group of comedians treated of in these pages are actors of a past generation, but they still live in the memories of many playgoers. The thought will no doubt occur to many that the great Burton might well have been included, and so he would have been had he not been celebrated in my published volume of his life.

It does not seem needful to dwell here upon such comedians as Henry Placide, William Rufus Blake, John Brougham, George Holland, and Charles Fisher. Their achievements are well known to stage historians, and the rehearsal of them will recall many an hour of past delight, while to those of a younger generation it will be interesting to read a chronicle of the triumphs of what their elders call the "palmy days" of the drama.

WILLIAM L. KEESE.

BROOKLYN, October, 1901.

K
M170486





HENRY PLACIDE

Henry Placide

1799-1870

AMONG comedians of the past whose artistic achievements have conspicuous record in dramatic annals, there is none whose acting won more unqualified approval from the critics and the public than that of Henry Placide.

In general, every comedian has his limitations, and it is too much to expect that equal excellence will attend every impersonation. We know that there are times when the comedian seems to have ill chosen his part, or that the part is not suited to his gifts; we perceive that our favorite is a little out of his element; the conviction is brought home to us that there is a lack of affinity here, or the simulation is faulty, or perhaps it is that the acting is perfunctory, owing to lack of interest—at all events, whatever the cause, we are disappointed, and we are likely to recall certain other delineations of the comedian in which no such shortcomings could be detected. This is only another way of hinting that though *Bottom* could discharge *Pyramus*, he might not with equal felicity have discharged *Thisbe* and the *Lion*.

✓ It was the happy gift of Placide that he never kindled disappointment and never failed to satisfy. Whatever the character, you felt it was in safe hands and could not be bettered. He was so emphatically an artist that all his embodiments bore the impress of a master hand. Of course, he had his famous parts and those of less renown, but as he never slighted anything, his artistic sense was manifested in the little as in the great. It was always his way, throughout his repertory, to present a finished picture. The same propriety was visible throughout his range of parts from the lowest to the highest. That anything that was worth doing at all was worth doing well seemed to be his feeling, and his appearance in any cast was a guarantee of thoughtful and painstaking effort. This fidelity to nature gave him enviable distinction, for his ✓ versatility was extraordinary. He could present the *Fat Boy*, in "Pickwick"; *Zekiel Homespun*, in the "Heir at Law"; *Doctor Caius*, in the "Merry Wives"; *Dogberry*, in "Much Ado"; *Doctor Ollapod*, in the "Poor Gentleman"; *Sir Peter Teazle*, in the "School for Scandal"; *Silky*, in the "Road to Ruin"—and as the eye and mind studied these contrasting pictures of life and manners, the marvel was that one actor was portraying them all, and doing it with such admirable discrimination that one seemed quite as meritorious as the other. ✓ This adaptability was due to exceptional powers of ✓ observation and a studious consideration of the

character to be assumed; his conceptions were therefore the fruit of thoughtful appreciation, and the character to be represented became a clear image in his mind. As to execution, nature had endowed him generously. He was of medium height, easy in movement, a face of marked distinction in repose, but with great flexibility of feature, and lighted by expressive dark eyes. His voice was clear and melodious, and his lines were spoken with just emphasis and perfect articulation. His elocution, indeed, was exceptional and distinguished, and I believe that those who nowadays recall the acting of Placide are quite as likely to dwell on his crisp and distinct utterance as on his delineations of character. Every stage historian that I have read seems to have been so impressed, and Ireland says, in referring to his versatility, that only in voice was he to be recognized. Disguise it as he would, he was sure to betray himself to a familiar ear. But although a familiar ear might detect the same voice in the persons of *Sir Harcourt Courtly* and *Grandfather Whitehead*, all sense was lost in the wonder and delight born of those famous assumptions.

Much has been said and written of this fine comedian and admirable man, and there is no dissenting voice with regard to his professional renown and his personal virtues. Held in popular esteem wherever known, and long a favorite on the New York stage, he easily and naturally stands first in my

Group of Comedians. I hope my record of his career may open a page of pleasant memory.

Henry Placide was born in Charleston, South Carolina, September 8, 1799. He was the son of Alexandre Placide, a Frenchman by birth, and his second wife. The profession of the father was that of gymnast and rope-dancer, in which line of performance he was highly accomplished. In company with his first wife, he first appeared in America, at the John Street Theatre, New York City, February 3, 1792. Losing his partner, he sought other fields, and in the course of time he became manager of the Charleston Theatre, South Carolina. It was while conducting this enterprise that he married his second wife, Miss WRIGHTEN, daughter of Mrs. WRIGHTEN, the popular vocalist of Drury Lane, known in America as Mrs. Pownall. The sons and daughters of this union were destined to perpetuate the name of Placide. They all achieved distinction, and, though outshone by the fame of the elder brother, their names have conspicuous and honorable record in theatrical history. Those names (besides Henry) are Caroline, Eliza, Jane, and Thomas. Caroline Placide became Mrs. Waring, and subsequently Mrs. W. R. Blake, and as Mrs. Waring was the mother of Mrs. J. W. Wallack, Jr. As Mrs. Blake she was for many years an established favorite with the public. Eliza Placide came early on the stage (indeed, all the Placides were precocious in that respect) and won

popularity as a vocalist and actress of light parts, but was not specially distinguished. She became successively Mrs. Asbury and Mrs. Mann. Jane Placide began her career as a dancer, progressed to the acting of youthful characters, when, obeying her ambition, she studied for the higher walks of the drama, and eventually became a tragic actress of renown, particularly in the South and West. I believe she never married. Thomas Placide was an acceptable low comedian, and played with success at most of the theatres of his time, but he was not to be compared with his brother Henry. The brothers often acted together, notably as the two *Dromios*, in the "Comedy of Errors." It is distressing to note that Thomas Placide, while suffering from a cancerous affection, committed suicide in the summer of 1877.

The Anthony Street Theatre, in New York City, is recorded as the scene of Henry Placide's professional beginnings, where, in company with members of his family, he acted some minor parts as early as 1814. He was then fifteen years of age, and the buds of promise were showing. Earlier than that, however, he probably appeared in some of his father's pantomimes and ballets; and there is, indeed, record of such appearances at the Park Theatre in 1807, and with the Charleston company in Augusta, Georgia, in 1808, where, by the way, his name was first printed in the play-bill, the date being October 14. During the nine years follow-

ing his performances at the Anthony Street Theatre in 1814, he followed the fortunes of the family, playing as circumstances permitted, exercising his musical and other talents of inheritance, adding constantly to his histrionic information, while his faculties were ripening for the career of fame on which he was about to enter.

This entrance was effected on the evening of September 2, 1823, at the Park Theatre, when he was announced to appear in the characters of *Zekiel Homespun*, in the "Heir at Law," and *Doctor Dablanœur*, in the "Budget of Blunders."

Though we do not attach the same importance to the début of a comedian as to that of a tragedian (probably owing to the fact that the latter essays the highest task at once, and stands or falls by it), I see no reason why this appearance of Placide should not be deemed an important event in theatrical history. It is true a comedian does not leap into notoriety in one performance, as Garrick and Edmund Kean did, but in the case of an actor so eminent as Placide became it is permissible to make emphatic note of a genius that at once asserted itself, and was destined for twenty years to remain almost without a peer in the range of characters he conceived and interpreted.

I never saw his *Zekiel Homespun*, but doubt not that in his young manhood he was spirited and interesting in the part, and that his fine face, speak-



HENRY PLACIDE.

LIBRARY OF
CALIFORNIA



ing eye, and alert grace of action formed a captivating personality. At all events, it seems that he at once won the favor of the audience, and continued to grow in popularity until he rivaled the best efforts of the famous Hilson and Barnes, who were above him in position and reputation on the Park stage, and finally had the field to himself, having demonstrated his ability to equal and even surpass their chosen impersonations. The development of his genius revealed a versatile aptitude that was surprising. So keen was his perception of human traits, habits, foibles, and peculiarities, and so competent and painstaking was his delineation of them, that each character he embodied was at once a portrait and a revelation. Such general excellence is unusual, and recalls what was said in the beginning—that Placide never slighted anything. Writing of him at this period, Ireland says: "From clowns of the broadest Yorkshire dialect to the most mincing Cockney cit, in the garrulous Frenchman and the high-bred English gentleman, the simplest rustic or the keenest London footman, in the clumsy hobbledehoy or the pathetic childishness of extreme old age, he was equally at home and equally superior." This covers a wide range, but it does not say too much. And Ireland is not alone. "I have seen Liston and Farren," said Edwin Forrest, in 1835, "yet I have seen nothing to alter the opinion which I have long entertained that Henry Placide is the best actor on

the stage in his own diversified range." George Vandenhoff, in writing of his first appearance at the Park Theatre in "Hamlet," in 1842, says: "Mr. Placide, the best *Polonius* and the best actor in his varied line in the country, was the *Polonius*." But I might quote many pages of just such tributes.

With this recognition and appreciation of his abilities, the comedian pursued his way and became widely known throughout the Union, always the same conscientious artist and never relaxing effort to better what was already so admirable.

He was a particular favorite in the South and West, and I find many references to him in N. M. Ludlow's interesting volume, "Dramatic Life as I Found It." This history of the rise and progress of the drama in the region of the Mississippi valley is well worth reading, on account of the noted names that appear in Mr. Ludlow's records. At one time or another the most distinguished artists, native and foreign, played engagements at the theatres under his management—such names as the elder Booth, Macready, Cooper, Forrest, Charles Kean, the elder Wallack, Power, Blake, Barrett, Brougham, and many others familiar to students of the stage. Placide was a prime attraction, and his engagement was looked forward to with eager interest. Mr. Ludlow recalls his first appearance in New Orleans, in 1843, when he acted *Grand-*

father Whitehead. "Mr. Placide made a great impression on his audience in his representation of *Grandfather Whitehead*, and while he repeated it the receipts were better than those of any other of his nights, and in previous or later years such fine and artistic acting would have filled the theatre for many nights. It was a masterly specimen of acting, and is fixed in my memory among the great gems of histrionic art with which I have met in my long acquaintance with the drama." *Grandfather Whitehead* was a renowned performance. I remember well when I first saw it, and how deeply it impressed me. It was a perfect picture of pathetic decrepitude, yet still with a suggestion of dignity, and the mist gathered in many eyes during the affecting portrayal.

My playgoing days may be said to have begun when the great Burton established himself in Chambers Street. This was in the summer of 1848. At that time Placide had touched the top round of fame, and was in his ripe prime. His *Sir Peter Teazle*, *Sir Anthony Absolute*, *Sir Harcourt Courtly*, and *Lord Ogleby* were acknowledged to be unexcelled on this side the water, and there were many kindred delineations that revived the best traditions of Farren, Munden, and Emery. His performances were varied by other examples in his repertory, such as *Doctor Ollapod*, *Colonel Hardy*, *Sir William Davenry*, and others, and his

famous specialties of *Jean Jacques Frisac*, *Mons. Dufard*, *Haversac*, and *Grandfather Whitehead*, with an occasional operatic venture, for he was an admirable buffo vocalist, and in earlier years was a frequent performer in that line. His familiarity with the French language made him an expert in those Gallic parts mentioned above, and which now seem to have vanished from the stage. But there must be some recollection still of *Frisac* or *Dr. Caius* that will bear witness to his inimitable manner, and to his facile blending of the grave and gay. And, thinking of *Frisac*, I am tempted to relate a pleasantry of Placide's. The occasion was a supper at Burton's home in Hudson Street, Placide being one of the guests. The drama of "Paris and London," in which *Frisac* appears, was then playing at the Chambers Street Theatre. Among the wines on the table was a cordial called "Rose," to which he was quite partial. In the course of the repast the bottle passed from his vicinity. Wishing to replenish his glass, he looked about him for his favorite. He did not perceive it, and Burton, noticing his roving glance, said, "What will you have, Harry?" At that moment Placide descried the cordial, and, rising and reaching over, he seized the bottle and, holding it up triumphantly, sang the lines of *Frisac*:

"Ah, Rose, have I found you? My folly forgive,
Or despair will become my grave-digger."

Those who remember Placide in the part can fancy the happy effect of his impromptu assumption of the impressible Frenchman.

In those days I used to think Placide was equal to anything, but I believe I shall have to make one exception. I never saw him play *Captain Cuttle*; but with Burton's incomparable portrayal in mind, somehow I cannot imagine any one else playing it but Burton. Possibly, had there been no Burton, Placide would have scored another victory. But really there has been but one *Captain Cuttle* that stands potentially clear in memory. It was on July 24, 1848, that "Dombey and Son" was produced at Burton's, and about four months later "Edith; or, Dealings with the Firm of Dombey and Son" was given at the Park. It may be of interest to note the respective casts.

BURTON'S (*Brougham's version*)

<i>Dombey</i>	MR. VARREY.
<i>Carker</i>	" MARSHALL.
<i>Major Bagstock</i>	" BROUGHAM.
<i>Toots</i>	" RAYMOND.
<i>Walter Gay</i>	" DUNN.
<i>Sol Gills</i>	" THAYER.
<i>Captain Cuttle</i>	" BURTON.
<i>Jack Bunsby</i>	" BROUGHAM.
<i>Edith</i>	MRS. A. KNIGHT.
<i>Mrs. Skewton</i>	" HUGHES.
<i>Florence</i>	MISS J. HILL.
<i>Susan Nipper</i>	MRS. BROUGHAM.

A Group of Comedians

PARK (*Walcot's version*)

<i>Captain Cuttle</i>	MR. PLACIDE.
<i>Dombey</i>	" J. GILBERT.
<i>Carker</i>	" C. W. CLARKE.
<i>Major Bagstock</i>	" G. BARRETT.
<i>Toots</i>	" WALCOT.
<i>Walter Gay</i>	" MOORHOUSE.
<i>Mr. Chick</i>	" HENRY HUNT.
<i>Jack Bunsby</i>	" JAMES SCOTT.
<i>Rob the Grinder</i>	" W. B. CHAPMAN.
<i>Edith</i>	MRS. SHAW.
<i>Mrs. Skewton</i>	" J. GILBERT.
<i>Florence</i>	" WALCOT.
<i>Mrs. Chick</i>	" WINSTANLEY.
<i>Miss Tox</i>	" DYOTT.
<i>Susan Nipper</i>	MISS TAYLOR.
<i>Mrs. Pipchin</i>	" GORDON.
<i>Mrs. Brown</i>	MRS. KNIGHT.
<i>Mrs. McStinger</i>	MR. H. HUNT!

The Park cast was a surprising distribution, but, says Ireland, "admirable as was the acting of Placide and Walcot, neither of them could stand for a moment against the superlative merit of Burton and Raymond."

✓ Placide was not broadly funny, like Burton or
 ✓ Holland, but he was the owner of a rich vein of ec-
 ✓ centric humor which appeared in effective develop-
 ✓ ment in such characters as *Ollapod*, *Frisac*, *Mons.*
Dufard, and the *Clowns* of Shakspeare. In Bur-
 ton's revival of "Twelfth Night" he contributed,
 as the *Clown*, greatly to the success and enjoyment

of the comedy. His admirable elocution gave point and vivacity to everything he said, for, indeed, his humor was expressed quite as much in felicity of utterance as in manner and action. His sense of the comic was disclosed without buffoonery. In the scene of the orgy he divided the honors with Burton and Barrett as *Belch* and *Aguecheek*, but his humorous coöperation in that ludicrous situation was still governed by his artistic discretion.

This discretion was a ruling faculty with him, and he had appraised it at its true value. He had begun with it, and he never lost sight of it. A consideration of it leads me to the belief that here may be found the reason why his acting offered no points to the imitator; for it is an interesting fact that among the many imitations on record of famous actors by mimetic experts, no attempt was ever made to imitate Placide. I say his acting offered no points to the imitator. I mean that he had no mannerisms that would tempt exaggeration—no peculiarities that could be called *Placidean* and always in evidence. He so identified himself with the part assumed that the portrayal was simply a piece of natural acting. His own personality was lost in the character, so that in fact there was no Placide to imitate—except, indeed, in the matter of voice.

I suppose Placide's fame will rest on his assumptions of *Sir Peter Teazle*, *Sir Harcourt Courtly*, *Sir Anthony Absolute*, *Sir William Fondlove*, and the

like, because they were ripe and finished studies in his repertory and belong to what may be called test-parts; but it is difficult, when we consider his length of service and his wide and varied range, to pronounce upon the question with certainty. Ireland says that his list of characters on the Park stage outnumbered five hundred, and that he was the original representative there of more than two hundred. This is a surprising record, and tells an impressive story of thought and application. How few outside of the profession realize the patient thinking and constant toil that have gone to the making of a character which in the ease and felicity of the execution seems to be no study at all!

Placide's *Doctor Ollapod*, *Colonel Hardy*, *Dogberry*, *Polonius*, *Farmer Ashfield*, *Fathom*, and others were greatly admired, and there were many other parts he made famous, most of them probably unknown to the present generation of playgoers. His *Grandfather Whitehead*, *Frisac*, *Mons. Dufard*, the *Gravedigger* in "Hamlet," and the rest, he had undeniably made his own, and no other name is associated with them.

In the gallery of high comedy* he comes into comparison with Blake and Gilbert, and a more famous trio and one more evenly matched it would be hard to find. If Placide's *Sir Harcourt Courtly* was inimitable, Blake's *Old Dornton* was unapproachable, and Gilbert's *Sir Peter Teazle* has never been surpassed. These three comedians were

equally great, and their traditions are very much akin.

"London Assurance" was first produced in America at the Park Theatre on October 11, 1841, Placide appearing as *Sir Harcourt*. The impression he made has never been effaced by the performance of any successor. The comedy proved the most popular play of the season. It was cast as follows :

<i>Sir Harcourt Courtly</i>	MR. PLACIDE.
<i>Charles Courtly</i>	" WHEATLEY.
<i>Dazzle</i>	" BROWNE.
<i>Max Harkaway</i>	" FISHER.
<i>Dolly Spanker</i>	" WILLIAMS.
<i>Mark Meddle</i>	" LATHAM.
<i>Cool</i>	" ANDREWS.
<i>Lady Gay Spanker</i>	MISS CUSHMAN.
<i>Grace Harkaway</i>	" CLARENDON.
<i>Pert</i>	MRS. VERNON.

Placide's last appearance as one of the stock company at the Park, where he had been enrolled for over twenty years, occurred on November 2, 1843, when he played *Captain Tarradiddle*, in "What Will the World Say," and *Grandfather Whitehead*. Thereafter he confined himself to limited engagements as a star there and elsewhere, and after Burton opened in Chambers Street, in 1848, he was seen at that renowned temple of the drama nearly every season in a round of his celebrated parts, the same careful artist as ever and giv-

ing delight to thousands. It was there I first saw him as *Colonel Hardy*, in "Paul Pry." I hear him now, at the close of the comedy, when things had drifted to a happy anchorage—hear him saying, in reply to the soothing remark, "Why, Colonel, you've everything your own way,"—"Yes, I know I have everything my own way; but, — it, I have n't *my own way* of having it!"

In choleric old men Placide was easily a master. All the touches that go toward the creation of a grim, irascible, thwarted, bluff old gentleman he commanded at will. But, indeed, he was master of all the arts that are required in the building of a character. He was perfectly familiar with all the details of theatrical device, and had left unstudied no trait or peculiarity that would identify him with the part assumed. But in saying this I am only repeating myself, and I feel there is no need to particularize. His versatility and the universal praise bestowed upon his performances tell the story better than I can hope to tell it.

The Winter Garden, New York City, was the scene of Placide's last appearances, in the spring of 1865. He opened in an original piece called "Corporal Cartouche," acting the titular character. He closed his engagement with the "Old Guard" and "Secret Service," playing *Haversac* and *Michael Perrin*, parts famous in his hands. This was the comedian's final farewell, and the audience must have been profoundly affected at parting

with an actor who had so long enjoyed the public respect and approval, and whose name was associated with so many memorable triumphs.

For many years after his retirement from the Park Theatre, Mr. Placide lived at Babylon, Long Island, where he was highly esteemed and always an object of affectionate interest. He died there, after a protracted illness, on January 23, 1870, in the seventy-first year of his age. This is the record of Ireland. Another record gives the year of his death as 1869, and his age as seventy. For a few years previous to his death he suffered the affliction of partial blindness.

He married, in 1845, the daughter of James McBeth, an actor of moderate ability. Miss McBeth was a minor actress and much Placide's junior. He left her handsomely provided for, and a number of relatives were also generously remembered. The widow survived him over a quarter of a century, dying at Babylon, Long Island, in the same house where her husband had lived and died. They had no children.

Contemporary criticism is of one accord as to the qualities and abilities of this great comedian. As has been said, I have encountered no dissenting voice, but the chorus of assent has sounded full and clear. I do not remember any actor who received so much unmixed encomium. And I think this praise was bestowed in recognition of the constancy and self-respect of his life; the artistic spirit

and exquisite felicity with which he conceived and executed his long line of stage portraits, and the conscientious regard in which he held his profession and his fame.

Space will not permit me to set down the many parts he acted, or to go into detail respecting their merits. Enough has been said to indicate the wide range of his repertory, and I have tried to say what I thought of his artistic method and of the ability he displayed in giving form to his conceptions. Those now living who remember him will not need an analysis of his powers to add to their recollections. But to the new generation of playgoers and actors it may be well worth while to commend to thoughtful reflection an example so inspiring to the best accomplishment, so marked by the exercise of every faculty, so unwearied in worthy endeavor, and so illumined by high purpose as may be found in the career of Henry Placide.

WILLIAM RUFUS BLAKE



WILLIAM RUFUS BLAKE.

THE
LIBRARY OF THE
CONGRESS
READERS ROOM
510 CONGRESS ST.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20540

William Rufus Blake

1805-1863

THIS comedian, whose fame was second to none on the American stage as a representative of old men, was born in Halifax, Nova Scotia, in 1805, in which place he is said to have made his début, acting in a strolling company. His first appearance in America, as recorded by H. P. Phelps in his "Players of a Century," was at the New Constitution Theatre, in North Pearl Street, Albany (formerly the Thespian Hotel), the date being December 29, 1823. The play was "The Stranger." He acted during the winter of 1823 in Albany, playing a round of light comedy parts, with an occasional venture in tragedy; but I find very few particulars in theatrical history of this stage of his career, and regret that I cannot set down his various characters and the casts of the plays in which he acted. He was a captivating fellow, and stories are told of him in which he appears to have been vulnerable to female blandishment; but I don't know how true they are, and they throw no light on his professional advancement, unless to suggest that an acceptable lover off

the boards was quite likely to be an acceptable one on.

Blake's first appearance in New York was made at the Chatham Garden Theatre, July 12, 1824, when he played *Frederick* in Colman's "Poor Gentleman," and the three-part character in "The Three Singles." He was then, as just said, a handsome fellow, of graceful bearing and vivacious disposition, and eminently fitted in person and ability for the young heroes of comedy and melodrama, a line in which he acted with marked success so long as his figure permitted; for nature had decreed that Blake's great fame was not to rest upon his portrayal of the dashing lover or buskined hero, by having in reserve for him a rotundity of form which, though it might bring joy to an alderman, was hardly the ideal physique for the light comedian. The time came at last when, as Ireland remarks, "his increasing corpulence warned him that his appearance was ill suited to the dashing coxcomb, silly fop, or sighing lover; and, giving his attention to the peculiarities of age, he succeeded in achieving a repute as the representative of old men, both serious and comic, second to none known to the American stage."

This criticism seems to me entirely just. I can recall no actor of the past, not even John Gilbert, who was superior to Blake in certain lines of old men—certainly in the rôle of tender pathos like *Old Dornton*, and in the portrayal of a sweetly

noble nature framed in venerable simplicity, as in *Jesse Rural*, he was unexcelled; and it is simply truth to say that with him departed from the stage that unique, all-affecting, wondrous embodiment—*Geoffrey Dale*, in "The Last Man."

It was February 21, 1848, that Blake first appeared in New York as *Jesse Rural*. This was at the Broadway Theatre, and the comedian had just been announced as stage manager. It was also his first appearance for six years in the city. The cast of "Old Heads and Young Hearts" was as follows:

<i>Earl Pompion</i>	MR. D. ANDERSON.
<i>Lord Charles Roebuck</i>	" DAWSON.
<i>Colonel Rocket</i>	" VACHE.
<i>Tom Coke</i>	" FLEMING.
<i>Littleton Coke</i>	" LESTER.
<i>Jesse Rural</i>	" BLAKE.
<i>Bob</i>	" HADAWAY.
<i>Lady Alice</i>	MISS F. WALLACK.
<i>Countess Pompion</i>	MRS. WINSTANLEY.
<i>Kate Rocket</i>	" SERGEANT.

The comedy was repeated a number of nights, and for his benefit Blake added *Geoffrey Dale*. "The Last Man" was first produced in New York at the Olympic Theatre, a playhouse which owed its origin in part to Blake, and of which he was the first stage manager. The original cast of the drama is given in Laurence Hutton's "Plays and Players," under date of October 9, 1837, and I copy it from his page.

"THE LAST MAN"

October 9, 1837

<i>Geoffrey Dale</i>	MR. WILLIAM R. BLAKE.
(<i>The Miser</i>)	
<i>Henry Wentworth</i>	" COREY.
(<i>A City Blade</i>)	
<i>Major Battergate</i>	" W. JONES.
(<i>Of The Brothers' Club</i>)	
<i>Lawyer Weaver</i>	" WESTON.
(<i>From London</i>)	
<i>Jacob Codling</i>	" NICKINSON.
(<i>The Miser's Man</i>)	
<i>Henry Dare</i>	" THOMAN.
<i>David Dare</i>	" J. H. KIRBY.
(<i>Ruffians. Alice Gurton's Nephews</i>)	
<i>Lucy Dale</i>	MRS. CONWAY.
(<i>The Miser's Niece</i>)	
<i>Alice Gurton</i>	" W. JONES.
(<i>Old Maid of Eltham</i>)	
<i>Barbara Gay</i>	" BLAKE.
(<i>Pretty Maid of Kent</i>)	

"London Assurance" followed "Old Heads and Young Hearts," with the following striking distribution:

<i>Sir Harcourt Courtly</i>	MR. BLAKE.
<i>Charles Courtly</i>	" G. VANDENHOFF.
<i>Dazzle</i>	" LESTER.
<i>Spanker</i>	" DAWSON.
<i>Lady Gay</i>	MISS FANNY WALLACK.
<i>Grace Harkaway</i>	" ROSE TELBIN.

The Mr. Lester mentioned in the foregoing casts was the future Lester Wallack, who made his first appearance in America at the Broadway Theatre, September 27, 1847, playing *Sir Charles Coldstream*, in "Used Up."

Although Blake's *Sir Harcourt* had been greatly admired in other cities, in New York it ranked below Henry Placide's. With respect to *Jesse Rural* and *Geoffrey Dale*, however, there was no dissenting voice. Nor has the supremacy of those performances been disturbed by any successor. During his engagement at the Broadway, Blake acted *Grandfather Whitehead* for the first time in New York, a part in which he again came into competition with Placide.

At the Chatham Garden Theatre, September 23, 1824, Blake began his first regular engagement in New York, opening as *Harry Thunder*, in "Wild Oats." The time came when he was the *Ephraim Smooth* of the comedy. In the course of the engagement many plays were given, among them Sheridan's "Pizarro" and Poole's "Married and Single," Blake acting respectively *Alonzo* and *Melford*, and continuing with the company for another season.

His next engagement was at the Lafayette Theatre, in Laurens Street, opening July 6, 1826, with *Young Marlow*, in "She Stoops to Conquer," and *Felix*, in "The Hunter of the Alps." The cast of the comedy was as follows :

<i>Sir C. Marlow</i>	MR. JONES.
<i>Young Marlow</i>	" BLAKE.
<i>Hardcastle</i>	" FISHER.
<i>Hastings</i>	" BERNARD.
<i>Tony Lumpkin</i>	" HYATT.
<i>Mrs. Hardcastle</i>	MRS. FISHER.
<i>Miss Hardcastle</i>	MISS TILDEN.
<i>Miss Neville</i>	MRS. JONES.

During this engagement Mr. Blake married Mrs. Waring, the widow of Leigh Waring and formerly Caroline Placide, the date being August 26. For his benefit, on September 8 the farce of "Turn Out" was produced, in which the lady made her bow to the public as Mrs. Blake in the character of *Marian Ramsay*, and the occasion was made specially interesting by her husband's appearance as *Dr. Truckle* in the same play, his first essay in an elderly rôle.

It may be mentioned in passing that Mrs. Blake was a charming and capable actress, and won renown in a range of varied parts wherein the artistic faculty and ready versatility displayed were a constant reminder of the family name she bore. She was long a favorite in New York and elsewhere, and worthily supported the professional efforts of her husband.

For several years Blake played engagements at various theatres, acting his range of light comedy and eccentric characters, showing always ability and comprehension, but with little suggestion of

the great fame to come. The turning-point had not yet been reached. His name appears on the bills of the Lafayette, Bowery, Chatham Garden, Franklin, and Park theatres, and there were occasional starring tours. Sometimes he was engaged to play a special part, and was not always a decided success. At the Park Theatre, in the spring of 1838, a humorous dramatization of "Pickwick" was produced, and Blake was engaged to play *Sam Weller*. The cast is of interest, owing to the fact that both Blake and Placide appeared in it. The drama was performed under the title of "Sam Weller; or, the Pickwickians."

<i>Pickwick</i>	MR. CHIPPINDALE.
<i>Augustus Snodgrass</i>	" WHEATLEY.
<i>Tracy Tupman</i>	" ISHERWOOD.
<i>Nathaniel Winkle</i>	" FISHER.
<i>Mr. Wardle</i>	" CLARKE.
<i>Alfred Jingle</i>	" RICHINGS.
<i>Old Weller</i>	" BLAKELY.
<i>Sam Weller</i>	" W. R. BLAKE.
<i>Fat Boy</i>	" PLACIDE.
<i>Miss Rachel Wardle</i>	MRS. WHEATLEY.
<i>Isabella Wardle</i>	" RICHARDSON.
<i>Emily Wardle</i>	MISS CUSHMAN.
<i>Mrs. Leo Hunter</i>	MRS. CHIPPINDALE.
<i>Mrs. Bardell</i>	" DURIE.

Ireland, in commenting upon this performance, says Blake "failed to impart the requisite expression to the otherwise irresistible jokes of that ever-

faithful but extraordinary valet, and consequently gave but little satisfaction in the part." He thought he would have played the *Fat Boy* much better, though not more effectively, than Placide, who was inimitable. With my recollection of Blake in after life, I can fancy him an admirable *Pickwick* or *Tupman*, but not in the least a *Sam Weller*. Even Burton failed to carry a realization of *Sam* to the minds of his audience when he played the part in Chambers Street. Thinking of Dickens, what a *Turveydrop* Blake would have made! He was once billed for the character at Wallack's in Brougham's version of "Bleak House," but I believe never played it; why, I know not.

It was on September 13, 1837, that the Olympic Theatre was opened to the public. The proprietors were Messrs. Willard and Blake, the latter caring for the stage management. A poetical address, written by Mr. E. Burke Fisher for the occasion, was delivered by Blake, and received with enthusiasm. The last verse was as follows:

"Friends of the Drama! pointing skyward now,
We ask a wreath to deck the Drama's brow;
Let them no ivy with Joy's laurels twine,
No dregs of Sorrow mingle with Mirth's wine—
We bid you here to laugh, and not to weep;
To wake your mirth, and hush your cares to sleep;
This will we do, and trust your smiles to win;
We will *pay out*, so long as you *pay in*!"

The bill of the evening comprised the farce of "Perfection," "The Lady and the Devil," and "The Married Rake," Mr. and Mrs. Blake appearing in the second piece. For a few months the Olympic's patrons were entertained by divers laughable pieces, when the comedian severed his connection with the theatre, and not long afterwards sailed for Europe. But he left behind him the memory of his celebrated performance of *Geoffrey Dale*, already chronicled. His farewell benefit took place at the Franklin Theatre, October 24, 1838, when he appeared in that character and in "The Three Singles."

Of Blake's performances across the water I can find no record. I am not sure that his visit was strictly a professional one, but it is certain that he played a short engagement at the Haymarket in London. This was in 1839, when he had not fully established himself as the representative of the famous old men of the drama. Ten years later, had he played in England, his *Old Dornton* would have revived recollections of the celebrated Munden, and his *Jesse Rural*, *Sir Peter Teazle*, and *Sir Anthony Absolute* would have won admiration from a London audience. I know not how long he remained abroad, but six years elapsed before he appeared again in New York. This was at the Broadway, in 1848, when he acted *Jesse Rural*, as already cited. During the few years after his return from Europe he probably played in other cities and managed theatres, and perhaps was en-

gaged in study and preparation for the change in his professional line. For now it was clear that the day of *Frederick* and *Young Marlow* was over, and the reign of *Sir Robert Bramble* and *Old Hardcastle* had begun. For fifteen years the stage was to enjoy the boon of a gallery of portraits unexcelled in artistic and sympathetic portrayal, and which has given splendor and importance to dramatic annals.

Nature had generously endowed Blake for the creation of his masterpieces. He possessed all the qualifications requisite for his adopted line, and displayed the happiest skill in developing his characters. His conceptions were the fruit of observation and reflection, and he brought to his intellectual limning a keen perception of the informing traits of his subject. He appreciated the differences and peculiarities that are observable in human nature, and no detail escaped him that would secure verisimilitude for his portrait. Some years ago, in a brief notice of the comedian, I used these words: "The characteristics of Blake's power were a broad heartiness, suggestive sentiment, and eloquent idealization. These traits informed respectively the parts he essayed, and gave to each in turn rare flow of spirit, richness of color, and poetic fervor. For the verbal expression of these salient elements, he possessed a tuneful voice, which rose or fell as the sway of feeling dictated, and his delivery was singularly felicitous in tone and empha-

sis." I could not say anything better now, but I can add that he was gifted with a delightful humor, which, subtly and delicately expressed, lent sweetness and charm to many of his impersonations. And I think his rotundity of figure, far from acting to his disadvantage, often aided the effect of his portrayals by suggesting dignity and consequence.

The first time I saw Blake was in "The Road to Ruin," and the impression he made has never been effaced. I was young, it is true, and sentimental, and easily moved; but my heart tells me that the effect would be the same could I see the actor in the play to-morrow. I have read since of the extraordinary sensation produced by the great Munden in the part of *Old Dornton*, but I have an abiding faith that the acting of the famous Englishman would have been no revelation to Blake; and I cannot, indeed, conceive of any added touch that would not have impaired, rather than heightened, the latter's superb delineation. But Blake's portrayal of the outraged, doting, fond, tender father is, like his *Jesse Rural*, as fresh in many memories as it is in mine. I shall never forget its pathos and its truth.

During Blake's engagement at the Broadway in 1848, John Brougham's comedy of "Romance and Reality" was produced for the first time on April 17. It was highly approved, and had a successful run. The cast was as follows;

<i>Asper Manly</i>	MR. BLAKE.
<i>Oliver Manly</i>	" VACHE.
<i>Jack Swift</i>	" BROUGHAM.
<i>Frank Meredith</i>	" FLEMING.
<i>Lavender Kyd</i>	" DAWSON.
<i>Tom Badger</i>	" HADAWAY.
<i>Rosabel</i>	MISS FANNY WALLACK.
<i>Barbara Manly</i>	MRS. WINSTANLEY.
<i>Blossom</i>	" WATTS.

For his benefit, a month later, Mrs. Mowatt's comedy of "Fashion" was first given in New York, with the following cast:

<i>Mr. Tiffany</i>	MR. FREDERICKS.
<i>Colonel Howard</i>	" KINGSLEY.
<i>Count de Jolimaitre</i>	" LESTER.
<i>Adam Trueman</i>	" BLAKE.
<i>Snobson</i>	" HADAWAY.
<i>Mrs. Tiffany</i>	MRS. WINSTANLEY.
<i>Seraphina</i>	" SERGEANT.
<i>Gertrude</i>	MISS F. WALLACK.
<i>Prudence</i>	MRS. WATTS.
<i>Millinette</i>	MISS TELBIN.

In the next season at the Broadway he was still on the bills, and played a round of parts in conjunction with Henry Placide—Placide as *Sir Peter Teazle*, *Doctor Ollapod*, and *Farmer Ashfield*, with Blake as *Crabtree*, *Sir Robert Bramble*, and *Sir Abel Handy*. The public must have been handsomely regaled by the performances of two such artists. Blake also figured in the bill for the benefit

of the American Dramatic Fund Association, given at the Astor Place Opera House on February 8, 1849, appearing as *Solus*, in "Every One Has His Fault," an afterpiece, says Ireland, never better cast in America. Here is the cast:

<i>Lord Norland</i>	MR. J. GILBERT.
<i>Solus</i>	" BLAKE.
<i>Sir R. Ramble</i>	" WALCOT.
<i>Harmony</i>	" BASS.
<i>Porter</i>	" W. B. CHAPMAN.
<i>Miss Spinster</i>	MRS. VERNON.
<i>Mrs. Placid</i>	MISS TELBIN.
<i>Miss Wooburn</i>	" WEMYSS.

Blake was still stage manager at the Broadway in the fall and winter of 1849-50, and appeared as *Lord Priory*, in "Wives as They Were," *Sir Peter Teazle*, *Dogberry*, *Sir Harcourt Courtly*, and others, among them *Mark Mayberry*, in a new comedy called "Extremes," a satirical play produced for the first time. Its author was a Mr. Sperry of Baltimore. Since it was highly successful and enjoyed a gratifying run, it may be useful to give the cast:

<i>Ebenezer Oldrich</i>	MR. WHITING.
<i>Mark Mayberry</i>	" BLAKE.
<i>Edward Erian</i>	" G. JORDAN.
<i>Augustus Smiley</i>	" WHEATLEY.
<i>Middleman Higgins</i>	" W. A. CHAPMAN.
<i>Allgrieve</i>	" W. B. CHAPMAN.
<i>Patrick</i>	" SHAW.

<i>Gash Gaskins</i>	MR. SKERRETT.
<i>Mrs. Crosby</i>	MISS A. FISHER.
<i>Mrs. Oldrich</i>	MRS. HIELD.
<i>Virginia</i>	MISS HORN.
<i>Nelly</i>	MRS. SKERRETT.

Purposing to visit New Orleans, Blake withdrew from the stage management of the Broadway in the spring of 1850. His retirement was the occasion of a grand complimentary benefit, given on March 20, and the bill embraced many distinguished names, among them Placide, Blake, Burton, Brougham, Lester, Jordan and Hamblin, and Mrs. Blake, Mrs. Abbott and Mrs. Skerrett.

At this period Burton's Theatre in Chambers Street was the great popular resort, and Blake, on his return from the South, joined the forces of that renowned house. He opened in the "School for Scandal," with the following strong association :

<i>Sir Peter Teazle</i>	MR. BLAKE.
<i>Sir Oliver Surface</i>	" BURTON.
<i>Joseph Surface</i>	" BLAND.
<i>Charles Surface</i>	" LESTER.
<i>Crabtree</i>	" T. B. JOHNSTON.
<i>Sir Benjamin Backbite</i>	" G. JORDAN.
<i>Moses</i>	" SKERRETT.
<i>Lady Teazle</i>	MRS. RUSSELL
(Afterwards Mrs. Hoey).	

Burton's company at that time was particularly strong, and a succession of the standard comedies

followed Blake's engagement, presented with a strength of distribution never excelled in this country, and in which Blake's great powers shone resplendent. Among them was "The Road to Ruin," with the following surprising cast :

<i>Goldfinch</i>	MR. BURTON.
<i>Old Dornton</i>	" BLAKE.
<i>Harry Dornton</i>	" LESTER.
<i>Milford</i>	" G. JORDAN.
<i>Silky</i>	" T. B. JOHNSTON.
<i>Sulky</i>	" BLAND.
<i>Smith</i>	" H. HOWARD.
<i>Sophia</i>	MISS HILL.
<i>Widow Warren</i>	MRS. HUGHES.
<i>Jenny</i>	" SKERRETT.

It was during this engagement that Dr. Northall's version of "David Copperfield" was produced with a success that almost rivaled that of "Dombey and Son." In these days of the dramatization of novels and histories the cast of "Copperfield" may be interesting :

<i>Micawber</i>	MR. BURTON.
<i>Copperfield</i>	" G. JORDAN.
<i>Steerforth</i>	" LESTER.
<i>Wickfield</i>	" HENRY.
<i>Uriah Heep</i>	" T. B. JOHNSTON.
<i>Traddles</i>	" LEVERE.
<i>Peggotty</i>	" BLAKE.
<i>Ham</i>	" BLAND.
<i>Agnes</i>	MISS ALDERMAN.

<i>Mrs. Steerforth</i>	MRS. HOLMAN.
<i>Betsy Trotwood</i>	" HUGHES.
<i>Rosa Dartle</i>	" RUSSELL.
<i>Mrs. Micawber</i>	" SKERRETT.
<i>Mrs. Gummidge</i>	" HENRY.
<i>Emily</i>	MISS HILL.
<i>Martha</i>	" WESTON.

Blake's *Peggotty* was a touching piece of acting, and Burton's *Micawber* was simply inimitable.

Blake played with Burton for another season, played later at Niblo's, and then joined the elder Wallack at the theatre formerly known as Brougham's Lyceum, where, with the brilliant company gathered there, he was seen in all his familiar and famous parts and many new ones—among them *Baron Bluffenbach*, in Brougham's comedy of "My Cousin German"; *Lemon Sowerby*, in "Sons and Systems"; *Bouret*, in Lester's comedy of "Two to One; or, the King's Visit"; *De Gournay*, in a new drama from the French, known as "Like and Unlike; or, the Sisters"; and *Plaskwith*, in a dramatization of Bulwer's "Night and Morning." He remained with Wallack until the fall of 1855, when he again directed the stage of the Broadway Theatre, returning later to Wallack's, where, for Lester's benefit, he gave his admirable performance of *Dr. Primrose*, in "The Vicar of Wakefield," and *Roundhead*, in "How to Grow Rich." During this engagement Agnes Robertson made her great success as *Jessie Brown*, in Boucicault's drama of

the "Relief of Lucknow," Blake playing *David Blunt*.

It is not needful to lengthen this record of the comedian's performances. At a later date he supported Charlotte Cushman at Niblo's, and played engagements at Burton's New Theatre and at Laura Keene's Theatre, on which last stage he acted *Nick Bottom*, in an elaborate revival of "Midsummer Night's Dream"; and he crowned his career with a long association with Wallack when that experienced manager moved to Broadway and Thirteenth Street. There, with powers unabated, he confirmed his supremacy in his chosen line of representation.

It was at Laura Keene's Theatre, in 1863, that Blake was seen as *Jesse Rural* for the last time; and at the same theatre, April 16, 1863, he made his last appearance in New York, playing, for his benefit, *Sir Anthony Absolute* and *Geoffrey Dale*.

Sixteen days after this performance he was taken suddenly ill at Boston, and died on April 22, 1863, having acted *Sir Peter Teazle* the night before. The news of his death came with startling suddenness to his friends and admirers in New York, and sincere sorrow mingled with the realization of the loss the stage had sustained. It was felt that a great actor had passed away, and that never more would be viewed those wondrous delineations that had so filled the mind and compelled admiration. The funeral services were held at the Wainwright Memorial Church in Hammond Street, where a

multitude gathered to pay the last tribute of feeling and respect. He was buried in Greenwood Cemetery on April 26, 1863.

WILLIAM RUFUS BLAKE has passed into stage history as one of the great comedians. In certain of his impersonations he was without a peer, and in others, not so indisputably his own, he was not often surpassed. Mr. Hutton thinks that he was probably the best *Sir Peter Teazle* we ever had in America. There are those who believe that John Gilbert was a better *Sir Peter*. Blake's *Sir Harcourt Courtly* was not so well liked as the *Sir Harcourt* of Henry Placide; perhaps Placide fell below the traditions of Farren. But it is idle to compare such artists as these. Each was great in his own great way. Placide, Blake and Gilbert will always stand together, a mighty trio, and as often as the plays are produced which contain their famous characters, their names will be recalled and the traditions of their triumphs recited.

It is forty years since I sat under the spell of Blake, yet even as I write these lines the form and face come back—I see the eloquent play of feature, the expressive gesture; I hear the voice, so melodious and full of feeling; I smile at each verbal felicity, and bask in the glow of humor; the whole man is before me in all his power and charm, and the spell is again cast by the boon of memory.

JOHN BROUGHAM



JOHN BROUGHAM.

John Brougham

1810-1880

THIS comedian, so well remembered as actor and man, was born in Dublin, May 9, 1810. He came of excellent parentage, and in early boyhood gave signs of artistic feeling and a fondness for theatrical representation. He studied at home and at college, but the study was meagre; yet in some way knowledge was gained—perhaps by “absorption,” as he explained the matter. He drifted into private theatricals, and is said to have been afflicted with stage fright, a statement which, recalling his easy nonchalance in after life, we read with a smile of incredulity. Certainly he got bravely over it. He tried surgery, and for family reasons gave it up; then applied for a cadetship, from which he was dissuaded; and finally (1830) got a footing in the Queen’s Theatre in London, where his theatrical career may be said to have begun. Later he became one of Madame Vestris’s company at the Olympic, and continued with her when she and Charles Mathews managed Covent Garden. He used his vacations in touring the

provinces, for the sake of practice, on which trips he played everything.

He now began to employ his pen, and wrote a burlesque for Burton, who was then acting at the Pavilion Theatre. This was his first attempt at composition. It was poor enough, he says, but somehow made a success. He wrote many other things—"numberless forgotten nothings." He tells us he wrote "London Assurance" in conjunction with Dion Boucicault, "who claimed the entire authorship, according to his usual ungenerousness. Had to bring an action against D. B., whose legal adviser suggested payment of half the purchase money, rather than conduct so damaging a case." In 1840 he managed the Lyceum Theatre, which ended in failure, as did most of his managerial enterprises.

Brougham came with his wife to New York in 1842, and appeared at the Park Theatre on October 4 of that year. One account says that he opened as *Dazzle* in "London Assurance," but he says himself that the play was "Love's Sacrifice," in which Mrs. Brougham played *Margaret Elmore* and he the light comedy part. The accounts agree, however, that he appeared as *O'Callaghan* in "His Last Legs," and made a decided hit. The engagement brought Mr. and Mrs. Brougham forward in a variety of parts, and justified Ireland's remark that their advent was "another addition of great importance to the New York stage." Brougham

author
director

speedily won gratifying popularity by the versatility of his performances, and especially by his Irish delineations, which were thought by many to be equal to the best efforts of Power.

The following is the cast of "Love's Sacrifice" as first produced in America :

<i>Matthew Elmore</i>	Mr. BARRY.
<i>Paul Lafont</i>	" ABBOTT.
<i>Eugene Delorme</i>	" C. W. CLARKE.
<i>St. Lo</i>	" BROUGHAM.
<i>Friar Dominic</i>	" BELLAMY.
<i>Jean Ruse</i>	" FISHER.
<i>Du Viray</i>	" S. PEARSON.
<i>Morluc</i>	" FREELAND.
<i>Margaret Elmore</i>	Mrs. BROUGHAM.
<i>Herminie de Vermont</i>	Miss BULOID.
<i>Manon</i>	Mrs. WHEATLEY.
<i>Jenny</i>	" VERNON.

A second engagement was entered into with the Broughams, and in the course of it was produced a new comedy by Boucicault entitled "Alma Mater ; or, Life in Oxford." As this play is not widely known, I give the cast, which was deemed powerful at the time :

<i>Count Pavé</i>	Mr. BROUGHAM.
<i>Sir Samuel Sarcasm</i>	" PLACIDE.
<i>Gradus</i>	" ABBOTT.
<i>Pliant</i>	" FISHER.
<i>Major O'Gorman</i>	" A. ANDREWS.
<i>Flick</i>	" W. H. WILLIAMS.

<i>Dactyl</i>	MR. BELLAMY.
<i>Wildfire</i>	" C. W. CLARKE.
<i>Somerset Venture</i>	" LOVELL.
<i>Pro Proctor</i>	" POVEY.
<i>Widow Venture</i>	MRS. WHEATLEY.
<i>Lilly Venture</i>	" BROUGHAM.

Surely a more attractive personality than that presented by Brougham at this time can hardly be imagined. Young, handsome, and vivacious, there was a charm in his manner and a contagion in his flow of spirits that filled his audience with delightful expectancy. His geniality of disposition soon established terms of kindly consideration, and it was seen that here was a nature at once buoyant and lovable. The popularity he then won continued throughout his long career.

It was quite natural that Brougham should succeed in the Irish drama. He had a native relish for Irish character, and was familiar with its many phases, and his mother-wit and captivating readiness aided him greatly in his portrayals. Had he given special attention to this field, I see no reason why he should not have rivaled Power; but he was too versatile to be confined to one line of parts. As a matter of fact, he played anything that had the promise of artistic success in it, and soon acquired an extensive repertory.

An extended starring tour followed the engagement at the Park, during which Brougham added to his fame and to his purse. He played in the

West and Southwest, and there are favorable notices of his performances given in N. M. Ludlow's "Dramatic Life as I Found It," a valuable history of the rise of the drama in the Mississippi valley. He was not so successful, however, in holding on to his profits as he might have been, and when he returned to New York he was a poorer, if a wiser man. He secured fresh engagements, and produced at the Broadway Theatre, with gratifying success, his comedy of "Romance and Reality." Shortly after he joined Burton in Chambers Street as his stage manager, and wrote for that house a number of plays, among them his version of "Dombey and Son," in which Burton made such a hit as *Captain Cuttle*. The drama was first produced July 24, 1848, with the following cast :

<i>Dombey</i>	MR. VARREY.
<i>Carker</i>	" MARSHALL.
<i>Major Bagstock</i>	" BROUGHAM.
<i>Toots</i>	" RAYMOND.
<i>Walter Gay</i>	" DUNN.
<i>Sol Gills</i>	" THAYER.
<i>Captain Cuttle</i>	" BURTON.
<i>Jack Bunsby</i>	" BROUGHAM.
<i>Edith</i>	MRS. A. KNIGHT.
<i>Mrs. Skewton</i>	" HUGHES.
<i>Florence</i>	MISS J. HILL.
<i>Susan Nipper</i>	MRS. BROUGHAM.

Notwithstanding the immediate success of Burton, Brougham, Raymond, and Mrs. Hughes, the

piece was withdrawn for improvements. It was reproduced a fortnight later, and ran through the entire season. As a matter of curiosity, I give the revised cast :

<i>Dombey</i>	MR. NICKERSON.
<i>Carker</i>	" G. JORDAN.
<i>Major Bagstock</i>	" BROUGHAM.
<i>Toots</i>	" RAYMOND.
<i>Sol Gills</i>	" MARSHALL.
<i>Walter Gay</i>	" GRACE.
<i>Captain Cuttle</i>	" BURTON.
<i>Jack Bunsby</i>	" BROUGHAM.
<i>Brogley</i>	" HAMILTON.
<i>The Native</i>	" C. T. PARSLÖE.
<i>Rob the Grinder</i>	" REA.
<i>Florence</i>	MISS NICKINSON.
<i>Edith</i>	MRS. A. KNIGHT.
<i>Mrs. Skewton</i>	" VERNON.
<i>Susan Nipper</i>	" BROUGHAM.
<i>Flowers</i>	MISS WILLIAMS.

The *Dombey*, the *Carker*, and the *Florence* were great improvements. I cannot guess why Mrs. Vernon was substituted for Mrs. Hughes; the latter was deemed admirable. For the rest, they were satisfactory. But the great *Edith* and the great *Susan Nipper* were yet to come in the persons of Mrs. Russell (afterwards Mrs. Hoey) and Miss Caroline Chapman. That capital comedian T. B. Johnston succeeded Raymond as *Toots*, but Raymond, I believe, never was equaled. As to Brougham's *Bunsby* and *Bagstock*, he invested the oracu-

lar utterances of the tar and the roughness and toughness and devilish slyness of the *Major* with a humor and spirit all his own.

In this same year, on November 13, Charles Walcot's drama of "Edith; or, Dealings with the Firm of Dombey and Son" was produced at the Park, then managed by Mr. Hamblin. The play was elaborately staged, and presented with a cast so extraordinary that I give it for the sake of preserving the record:

<i>Captain Cuttle</i>	MR. PLACIDE.
<i>Mr. Dombey</i>	" J. GILBERT.
<i>Mr. Carker</i>	" C. W. CLARKE.
<i>Major Bagstock</i>	" G. BARRETT.
<i>Mr. Toots</i>	" WALCOT.
<i>Walter Gay</i>	" MOORHOUSE.
<i>Mr. Chick</i>	" HENRY HUNT.
<i>Jack Bunsby</i>	" JAMES SCOTT.
<i>Rob the Grinder</i>	" W. B. CHAPMAN.
<i>Edith</i>	MRS. SHAW.
<i>Mrs. Skewton</i>	" J. GILBERT.
<i>Florence</i>	" WALCOT.
<i>Mrs. Chick</i>	" WINSTANLEY.
<i>Miss Tox</i>	" DYOTT.
<i>Susan Nipper</i>	MISS TAYLOR.
<i>Mrs. Pipchin</i>	" GORDON.
<i>Mrs. Brown</i>	MRS. KNIGHT.
<i>Mrs. McStinger</i>	MR. H. HUNT!!

Notwithstanding this array of talent, its run was but brief. The public interest felt in Brougham's story as acted at Burton's was not lessened. Even

Placide and Walcot were not to be compared with Burton and Raymond. Mr. Gilbert was fine in *Dombey*, and Mary Taylor as *Susan Nipper* was surpassed only by Miss Chapman. It was said that Mrs. Shaw, as *Edith*, in acting and in appearance, should alone have carried the drama to victory. But, on the whole, the Chambers Street production was the popular success.

Brougham remained two seasons with Burton, during which time he was frequently on the bills in old and new characters, and many of his own pieces were performed, among them another chapter from "*Dombey and Son*" entitled "*The Capture of Captain Cuttle*," and a drama from Thackeray's "*Vanity Fair*," cast as follows:

<i>Sir Pitt Crawley</i>	MR. T. JOHNSTON.
<i>Mr. Pitt Crawley</i>	" MORTIMER.
<i>Rawdon Crawley</i>	" BROUGHAM.
<i>Joe Sedley</i>	" BURTON.
<i>Lord Steyn</i>	" MEARS.
<i>Mr. Sedley</i>	" HAMILTON.
<i>Major Dobbin</i>	" CHRISTIAN.
<i>Major O'Dowd</i>	" REA.
<i>Miss Crawley</i>	MRS. VERNON.
<i>Mrs. O'Dowd</i>	" BROUGHAM.
<i>Amelia Sedley</i>	" A. KNIGHT.
<i>Rebecca Sharp</i>	MISS CHAPMAN.

Burton was prevented by an accident from appearing, which was a great disappointment. Miss Chapman carried off the honors of the play. On

December 3, 1849, Morris Barnet's comedy of "The Serious Family" was produced for the first time in America. As *Captain Maguire* was one of Brougham's most admired performances, I give the original cast :

<i>Aminidab Sleek</i>	MR. BURTON.
<i>Charles Torrens</i>	" C. W. CLARKE.
<i>Captain Maguire</i>	" BROUGHAM.
<i>Frank Vincent</i>	" LEACH.
<i>Lady Sowerby Creamly</i>	MRS. HUGHES.
<i>Mrs. Charles Torrens</i>	" J. RUSSELL.
<i>Mrs. Delmaine</i>	MISS C. CHAPMAN.
<i>Emma Torrens</i>	" HILL.

Somebody has said of Brougham in this part that it fitted him like his skin. All his engaging qualities were exhibited in the portrayal, and his dash and elegance, coupled with an audacious humor and unflagging spirit, delighted his audience beyond measure. The colloquies between *Sleek* and *Maguire* were an entertainment in themselves. It may not be amiss here to refer to Brougham's extemporaneous fluency, which he tells us was developed during the run of this piece. He was always called out for a speech at the end, and always answered the call and delivered himself felicitously. On one occasion Burton came on and interrupted the speech, and a war of words followed. After that the audience demanded the interruption every evening.

It was really a great treat to see Burton and Brougham together. The two actors were so ready, so full of wit, so alive to each other's points and byplay, that any fanciful interpolation in the text or humorous impromptu by the one was instantly responded to by the other, and the house was often thrown into convulsions of merriment by these purely unpremeditated sallies. This was notably the case in the afterpiece of "An Unwarrantable Intrusion"—committed by Mr. Brougham upon Mr. Burton—when in the tag the comedians suddenly assumed their own persons, and, addressing each other by their proper names, engaged in a droll colloquy respecting the dilemma of having nothing to say to conclude the piece; and each suggesting in turn something that ought to or might be said to an audience under such peculiar and distressing circumstances, the audience meanwhile in a state of hilarious excitement, drinking in every sparkling jest and repartee, and wishing the flow of humor would last forever.

Brougham undertook the management of Niblo's Garden after leaving Burton, and produced there several of his plays. His next venture was Brougham's Lyceum, which he opened in December, 1850. He actively employed his powers here as actor and author, producing among other things a dramatization of Dickens's "David Copperfield," in which he was admirable as *Micawber*. He also adapted "The Actress of Padua" for Charlotte

Cushman. The business was prospering when some question arose respecting the safety of the building, and in the end he became the victim of sharp dealing, was forced to give up the theatre with a heavy debt to bear, which it cost him years of labor to discharge. He then went to the Bowery, and produced "King John" on a scale of splendor never before attempted in New York, but it resulted in financial failure. To recoup himself, he energetically set to work and wrote and put on the stage drama after drama of a sensational cast, such as "The Pirates of the Mississippi," "The Gunmaker of Moscow," "Tom and Jerry in New York," and others, all meritorious pieces, but the pecuniary success was not great. Relinquishing the reins of management, he joined the company of the elder Wallack, who had installed himself in the late Brougham's Lyceum at Broadway and Broome Street. This was a wise move, for his associations were agreeable in every way; he was well paid, and his talents fully appreciated. His name was conspicuous on the bills, and he appeared in most of his favorite parts, to the delight of the Wallack audiences. Many of his best plays were produced during this engagement—"The Game of Love," "The Game of Life," "Bleak House," "A Decided Case," "The Ruling Passion," "Playing with Fire," and his surprising burlesque "Pocahontas."

This extravaganza, first acted at Wallack's, took

✓ the town by storm, and its bons-mots, local hits, and trenchant witticisms were on the lips of everybody. In structure, idea, and treatment of theme it was a triumph of wholesome mirth, and a striking exhibition of the author's witty invention. To this day old playgoers revel in their recollections of Brougham and Walcot in their respective parts. Even now, the present writer seems to hear once again the tuneful voice of Brougham in his capital smoking-song set to the air of "Widow Machree":

"Oh, wid a dhudieen I can blow away care,
 Oh hone, wid a dhudieen!
 Black thoughts and blue devils all melt into air,
 Oh hone! wid a dhudieen!
 If you 're short any day,
 Or a note have to pay,
 And you don't know the way,
 To come out of it clean;
 From your head and your heart
 You can make it depart,
 Oh hone! wid a dhudieen!"

The printed text of "Pocahontas" is rather a literary curiosity. The word-plays are innumerable, and every point is so indicated that the page is fairly peppered with italics. And there are some very excellent puns. For instance, Smith's life is in danger, and he asks permission to say a few last words, to which request *Powhatan* replies:

"We 're *tied to time*, and *time and tide* won't wait,
You must *die early* so you can't *dilate!*"

Combinations as happy are of frequent occurrence throughout the play.

After several seasons with Wallack, he was seen at Burton's New Theatre, where he remained until he sailed for Europe in 1860. While with Burton he produced several plays, among them his burlesque of "Columbus," a companion picture to "Pocahontas," and the amusing piece "This House to be Sold." He remained five years abroad, acting at various theatres and adapting and constructing plays for artists in his profession. Returning to America in 1865, he opened in a three months' engagement at the Winter Garden Theatre, acting a round of his well-known and favorite parts. Later he appeared at the Olympic and Wallack's, and produced at the last-named theatre his own drama of "The Lottery of Life," which had a gratifying run of nine weeks. In 1869 he opened Brougham's Theatre, which was his last essay at management, for through the owner's treatment of him he was obliged to close it after a season of ten weeks. During that time, however, he gave to the public his capital burlesque of "Much Ado About a Merchant of Venice," one of the best of his efforts in that line of composition.

He acted the burlesque *Shylock* on the last night at this theatre, and made a touching and witty

farewell speech at the close. A banquet in his honor was given at the Astor House on the night following the closing of his theatre, at which Mr. Charles Stetson presided, and many leading members of the profession spoke in his praise, and at which was laid the foundation of a benefit for him, which occurred on May 9 following. There were two performances given, one at Niblo's Theatre in the afternoon, and one in the evening at the theatre since known as Haverly's. The afternoon performance was "The School for Scandal," and very strikingly cast:

<i>Sir Peter Teazle</i>	MR. JOHN GILBERT.
<i>Sir Oliver Surface</i>	" JOHN BROUGHAM.
<i>Joseph Surface</i>	" NEIL WARNER.
<i>Charles Surface</i>	" EDWIN ADAMS.
<i>Crabtree</i>	" A. W. YOUNG.
<i>Sir Benjamin Backbite</i>	" OWEN MARLOWE.
<i>Rowley</i>	" T. J. HIND.
<i>Moses</i>	" HARRY BECKET.
<i>Trip</i>	" J. C. WILLIAMSON.
<i>Snake</i>	" FRANK RAE.
<i>Careless</i>	" J. W. COLLIER.
<i>Sir Harry Bumper</i>	" R. GREEN.
<i>Lady Teazle</i>	MRS. D. P. BOWERS.
<i>Maria</i>	MISS PAULINE MARKHAM.
<i>Lady Sneerwell</i>	MRS. JOHN SEFTON.
<i>Mrs. Candour</i>	MISS FANNY MORANT.

During his later years he played at Wallack's and Daly's, and made a few professional tours, but ill health began to tell upon him, and he grew

weary of his professional labors. Happily, a series of performances for his benefit secured him an annuity which eased the burden of his declining days. His last appearance on the stage was at Booth's Theatre, October 25, 1879, when he acted *Felix O'Reilley* in Boucicault's play of "Rescued." He died June 7, 1880.

Brougham was twice married. His first wife was Miss Emma Williams, a woman of great beauty, whom he married in 1838. She died in 1865. His second wife was Miss Annette Nelson, whom he married in 1847. She died in 1870. They were both actresses.

JOHN BROUGHAM was admired as a comedian and loved as a man. His traits of character were such as to win and hold many friends. He was gentle, considerate and generous. He was buoyant in nature, genial in disposition, and possessed those qualities of mind and heart that create and endear companionship. Many affectionate friends have left on record their estimate of his intellectual powers, his manliness and his worth. His memory is fragrant with noble and loving deeds.

As a comedian, for nearly forty years he was in the public eye, and contributed to the amusement and instruction of thousands. He was a most industrious man, as his long list of writings sufficiently attests. Over seventy-five plays of one kind or another were the product of his intellectual en-

ergy, and many of his dramas hold the stage to-day. His versatility was remarkable, as well in his compositions as in his acting. As a writer of burlesque, he was unmatched in his generation, and no successor has thus far appeared. When I first saw him at Burton's Theatre in the early fifties he had entered on his career of popularity, and was acting *Bagstock* and *Bunsby* in his own "Dombey and Son," and *Captain Maguire* in "The Serious Family." He won my admiration and affection from the start, and Brougham has remained a favorite figure in my recollections of the stage. Not long after his death, in a slight sketch I said of him: "His inexhaustible flow of spirits, in his best days, pervaded all his acting and invested the most unattractive part with an alluring charm, as many a prosaic spot in nature becomes enchanted land by the music of falling waters. Add to this exuberant vitality a rich endowment of mother-wit, a bright intelligence, keen sympathy and appreciation, and rare personal magnetism, and you have before you 'glorious John,' whose hearty voice it was always a pleasure to hear, and whose face, beaming with humor, was always welcomed with delight." I could not better these words now.

On the day of his funeral the following verses were published in the New York "Commercial Advertiser." They were written by Henry Morford, a poet and journalist of New York, and are so feeling and sincere a tribute that I give place to them here.

GOOD JOHN BROUGHAM

By HENRY MORFORD

Calmly and peacefully went away
One of earth's good fellows, two days ago;
A man who was moulded of finest clay—
While so many are red-brick mud—or dough!
A man with a red-blood-throbbing heart,
Who felt for his brothers in joy or pain,
And who knew no nobler office for art,
Than calming a pulse or soothing a brain.

Good! good John Brougham! Let the record stand,
Though many a stain from his earthly kin
May have marred his life or soiled his hand—
Though he knew the strength of human sin!
What was it the Master said? "To her
Be much forgiven, for her loving much!"
Who knows but for him that thought will stir,
And the same warm heart win the healing touch?

No man cried "Help!" and he passed by,
No man plead "Give!" without response,—
Ay, even when, judged with impartial eye,
His own were often the keener wants.
No land, or people, beyond his ken
Lay pleading for that which his hand withheld:
He was *facile princeps* of great-souled men;
Ah, when has a sadder death been knelled?

Within his coffin—such scanty space!—
What characters crowd, to share his rest!
We have looked our last on many a face
That the poet-actor's being expressed!

Shall we name them? No! on the mimic stage
They will move no more, since he is gone;
And the pathos and mirth of many a page
With the same sad touch must be withdrawn.

And yet, why mourn him? His life has been
Full lived, to beyond the seventy years.
It is time to change the worn earthly scene
To another, and brighter, in other spheres.
So we lay him down, in the peace of heaven,
With a fervent prayer for the soul new born—
Yet a prayer no warmer than he has given
To all mankind, from his natal morn.

GEORGE HOLLAND



GEORGE HOLLAND.

THE
LIBRARY
OF THE
MICHIGAN
UNIVERSITY



George Holland

1791-1870

GEORGE HOLLAND, well remembered as a comedian of peculiar and irrepressible drollery, was born in England, December 6, 1791. Few actors in our annals have enjoyed so long a career of popularity as was permitted to this worthy man. His first appearance on our stage was in 1827, and he said farewell in 1870. Previous to coming here he had had some experience in England. For several years he had tried to get a business opening in sundry towns, but failed in various ventures; and having some acquaintance with members of the theatrical profession who admired his comic abilities, he was induced to enter upon an actor's career, and made his first essay at Elliston's Theatre in Birmingham, and subsequently under De Camp in Newcastle. This theatre opened with "The School for Scandal" on December 28, 1818, and Holland was cast for *Moses*. He was then twenty-seven years old. The whole cast seems interesting enough to preserve here :

<i>Sir Peter Teazle</i>	MR. GRANT.
<i>Oliver Surface</i>	" JEFFERSON.
<i>Crabtree</i>	" GEORGE BUTLER.
<i>Joseph Surface</i>	" TYRONE POWER.
<i>Charles Surface</i>	" DE CAMP.
<i>Careless</i>	" HUNTLEY.
<i>Moses</i>	" GEORGE HOLLAND.
<i>Trip</i>	" CHARLES HILL.
<i>Lady Teazle</i>	MISS BARRY.
<i>Lady Sneerwell</i>	" FORBES.
<i>Maria</i>	" POVEY.
<i>Mrs. Candour</i>	MRS. HENRY.

Many of these names will sound familiar to readers of stage history. It may be mentioned that Holland and Power became fast friends, and a score of years afterwards at New Orleans, when Holland was treasurer of the St. Charles Theatre and Power the star of the season, they discussed a London engagement for Holland, which never was carried out, owing to poor Power's death.

Holland made his first bow on the American stage at the Bowery Theatre, September 12, 1827, appearing as *Jerry* in the burletta "A Day After the Fair," a piece with which his name became identified, and in which he assumed half a dozen different characters with great skill and success. He was a master of grimace, and indulged himself freely in its exhibition. He was also an amusing comic singer, and had a trick of ventriloquism which lent diverting variety to his songs and imitations. It was clear that here was a fun-maker.

His next character was *Thomas* in the play of "The Secret," a part in which he is said never to have been equaled; and thereafter he was seen in a round of characteristic parts, playing for his own benefit the *Gravedigger* and *Ophelia*, in the famous travesty of "Hamlet." A later season saw him at the Sans Souci Theatre, and at the close of the engagement he introduced, for his benefit, his celebrated entertainment called the "Whims of a Comedian," personating nine characters.

After a few seasons, Holland went south on a professional tour, and I find that early in 1829 he was billed for a special engagement at the theatre in Camp Street, New Orleans, to play in two pieces in conjunction with Mrs. Knight. The plays were "Guy Mannering" and the farce of "Turn Out," Holland appearing as *Dominie Sampson* and *Gregory*, and Mrs. Knight as *Julia Mannering* and *Marian Ramsay*. Both sang songs in the farce. The comedian, by the way, almost invariably introduced a song into his farces. His next engagement was in Louisville, where he opened in "A Day After the Fair," and for two weeks played a round of his peculiar pieces. It was at Louisville that he made the acquaintance of N. M. Ludlow, the author of "Dramatic Life as I Found It," and the relation grew into a warm friendship. Indeed, after his engagement, which was extended, Holland and his wife made their home for some time with Ludlow and family.

Ludlow has much to say of Holland's entertaining qualities, his comic resources, and his capital good humor. They made pleasure excursions together, and Holland was always the soul of the party. It is the opinion of Ludlow that had Holland begun in the right way and studied in the right school he would have achieved great distinction as a low comedian. Ludlow meant, I think, that Holland often lost sight of the artist in being the funny man, and for the sake of being funny would be needlessly comic. Your low comedian will be extravagant at times, and the judicious will grieve in consequence, and perhaps Holland sinned in that particular; but in the same breath with his opinion Ludlow says: "As an actor he was very animated and rapid, keeping his audience in constant good humor the entire time of his being on the stage." Much will be forgiven the comedian who does that.

Holland became a great favorite in the South during his stay, and his name is found on the bills of the period. He was in the cast of "The School for Scandal" at the St. Charles during Ellen Tree's engagement, and in that of "Much Ado About Nothing" during Mr. Caldwell's farewell performances. He also officiated as treasurer of the St. Charles, occasionally appearing on the stage. It was at New Orleans that he and Ludlow again met, and their earlier friendship was revived. The St. Charles Theatre was destroyed by fire in 1843,

and Holland returned to New York, and in the same year became a member of Mitchell's Olympic Theatre.

For six years Holland tickled the Olympic audiences with his

"Quips and cranks and wanton wiles,
Nods and becks and wreathed smiles,"—

appearing in all those light and mirthful pieces with which Mitchell was wont to regale his patrons—such pieces as "Who 's the Composer?" "Lend Me Five Shillings," "Devil in Paris," "Mr. and Mrs. Caudle," "Corporal's Wedding," "Savage and the Maiden," "A Wife for an Hour," "Out on the Sly," "Seeing Holland," "Robinson Crusoe the Second," "Beulah Spa," "Light Troop of St. James," "Kissing Goes by Favor," "The Jacobite," "How to Settle Accounts"—with Holland as *Cafarini*, *Golightly*, *Crequet*, *Mrs. Caudle* (Mitchell played *Mr. Caudle*), *Corporal Cobb*, *Folair*, *Joskyn Gaiter*, *Pimlico Pippins*, *John Downey*, *Marmaduke Snodgrass*, *Hector Templeton*, *Smallbones*, *Grillon*, *John Duck*, *Whittington Widgetts*.

These laughable plays are rarely seen nowadays, with the exception of "Lend Me Five Shillings," which has a place in Mr. Jefferson's repertory; but we may be very certain that Holland made the most of them. The farce was popular then, and four pieces were often on the bill of an evening.

It was at this time that Mary Taylor was winning all hearts with her delightful personality, and in the summer of 1844, when the company migrated to Niblo's, Mitchell produced "The Child of the Regiment," with Miss Taylor as *Marie*, one of her first original characters, and in which she achieved a great triumph, her youth and vocalization making a real sensation. Holland also appeared in the cast, playing *Lobwitz*. It may be mentioned that Holland, during this period, was occasionally seen on other boards than the Olympic stage, and in 1848 he was the dramatic director of Castle Garden. His popularity constantly grew, so that when he again went south in 1849 his fame as a mirth-compelling comedian had preceded him, and his engagement at the New Orleans Varieties Theatre was a succession of triumphs.

On his return to New York he acted at Burton's Theatre for a short season, and then enlisted under the elder Wallack's banner, which waved from the theatre in Broadway near Broome Street, formerly Brougham's Lyceum, and he continued after the removal to Broadway and Thirteenth Street, and with a single exception—when he joined Wood's Minstrels during a season of panic—remained connected with the company down to the close of the season of 1867-68. Wallack had a strong friendship for Holland, and welcomed him to his ranks in his third season, the comedian appearing as *Chubb* in "The Game of Love," and thereafter was

frequently on the bills in his characteristic parts. When Lester Wallack assumed control after his father's death, and appeared after a long absence from the stage as *Young Marlow* in "She Stoops to Conquer," Holland played *Tony Lumpkin* with such uncommon spirit that Mr. John Gilbert, the stage manager, remarked that dramatic biography furnished no similar instance of a performer playing the character at the advanced age of seventy-five.

Holland brought to Wallack's a wide and varied experience. He had played in every city of consequence in the Union, was well known and esteemed in the profession, had achieved popularity wherever he appeared, and was admitted to be out of the reach of rivalry in his peculiar line. That peculiar line soon became known at Wallack's, and many an old playgoer can still remember Holland's diverting drollery. Sometimes he played a part with such surprisingly comic effect that it seemed like a new creation, as in the case of *Bunberry Kobb*, in Lester Wallack's "Rosedale," where in the quadrille he convulsed the house by his ludicrous effort to dance the figures in accordance with the little manual he carried. I can see his stolen glances and his marvelous movements now!

During the season of 1869-70 Holland was without any engagement. He was seventy-eight years old, and time was telling on him. In fact, he had grown so feeble that he rarely appeared, yet he

was so endeared to the public that his mere presence evoked the old applause. He roused himself, however, to meet an engagement which had been kindly tendered him by Mr. Augustin Daly, and at the Fifth Avenue Theatre he appeared in a number of parts, his last character being the *Reporter*, in Miss Logan's comedy of "Surf." His last appearance on the stage was at his own benefit, given by Mr. Daly at his theatre, May 15, 1870. The account of this event I copy from the Memoir written by Mr. T. H. Morrell.

HOLLAND'S LAST APPEARANCE

The last appearance and benefit of Mr. Holland took place at the Fifth Avenue Theatre on the night of the 15th of May, 1870. The performance of the evening was "Frou-Frou," and it had been arranged with the manager that in consequence of the feebleness of Mr. Holland's health he should only appear before the audience for a few moments between the first and second acts. When the time had arrived and the curtain was raised, Mr. Holland appeared, led forward by Mr. Daly and Mr. Harkins, in the midst of most enthusiastic plaudits. The old veteran then took his seat in an arm-chair, and the whole company gathered round him on the stage, forming a very striking tableau. Mr. Daly then stepped forward to the footlights and delivered for him the following address, in a graceful and effective manner:

"LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: It was Mr. Holland's intention to say a few words in his own behalf this evening, but at the last moment the rare old comedian, who has represented so many characters in his time, finds it im-

possible to represent himself, and he has asked me to read to you these words which he had hoped to deliver for himself:

"LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: [Please now to consider, said the speaker, that the veteran is speaking to you, through his young manager, proud also to be his friend.] Of the various characters in which I have for the last forty years appeared, the present is the most arduous—since I feel how utterly inadequate any words of mine are to express my feelings of pride and gratitude. I have not often in my long career been troubled with what is called "stage-fright," but I see so many kind faces turned toward me, I feel that my own worth is so small and your favor is so great, and my heart is so full of emotion, that the words which are needed for expression fail me. I am, for the time being, no longer a low comedian, but a heavy, blubbing father. Instead of quips and cranks, I feel myself better fitted for weeping—at the thought that the proud privilege of appearing in the character of a recipient of your favor may not be accorded much oftener. There is no stage delusion in my words when I say that I thank you with my whole heart for past and present kindness, nor when I assure you that while memory lasts the recollection of this night's honor will endure. Again and again, I thank you.'"

At the conclusion of the address Mr. Harkins, on behalf of several friends, presented the old actor with a basket of flowers, the leaves surrounding it formed of greenbacks. Mr. Holland was again called out, and, in response to the hearty greetings, simply and feelingly said, "God bless you."

Mr. Daly was all kindness to the old comedian. Although it was evident that Mr. Holland would never again appear before the footlights, he was

retained at the same salary. But a darker curtain than any within the walls of a theatre was descending. Some abatement of his bodily afflictions was granted him at last, and on the 20th of December, 1870, he died in his sleep. He was seventy-nine years and fourteen days old. A host of friends and members of the profession attended his funeral three days afterwards at the Church of the Transfiguration—the "Little Church Around the Corner."¹

Mr. Holland was twice married. His first wife, who came with him to America, died in 1834, and in 1839 or 1840 he married a daughter of Mrs. De Luce, formerly of the Park Theatre. Shortly after his death a movement was set on foot among the profession, originating in New York, to give the widow and children benefits in as many theatres as could be obtained for the purpose. I think over \$10,000 was realized from the enterprise. It was a great testimonial.

✓ George Holland was one of the funniest men
✓ known to our stage. He was not an artist in the

¹ Joseph Jefferson, the celebrated comedian, on behalf of the family of Mr. Holland, made application to the Rev. Mr. Sabine to officiate at his funeral, but, learning that he had been an actor, he declined to do so. He recommended Mr. Jefferson to go to the "little church around the corner," where such things were done—who accordingly left him, exclaiming, "All honor to the little church around the corner!" The name has become historic. It is an old story, but I record it for the sake of history.

way of bringing out points of character; his aim was to ransack the part for points of fun. He was the very spirit of farce, and an adept in the employment of every comic device that would amuse his audience. He seemed to care as much for farcical display as for wit or sentiment or character drawing. He has left no theatrical comedy portraits of finished excellence that stand out as exemplars like those of Placide and Blake. Indeed, he often set at naught all the rules, principles, and purposes of legitimate acting. He was a born fun-maker, and made laughter for a generation. He will also be remembered for his gentleness and his humanity, his domestic virtues and his unsullied life, and his patience and fortitude through calamity and suffering.

CHARLES FISHER



CHARLES FISHER.

THE
OF
THE
OF

Charles Fisher

1816-1891

I REMEMBER well the first appearance of Charles Fisher in America. It was at Burton's Theatre in Chambers Street, and the date was August 30, 1852. The play was the "School of Reform," Mr. Fisher acting *Ferment*. On the same evening, by the way, and in the same play, Lysander Steele Thompson made his American debut, appearing as *Bob Tyke*. This actor's specialty was the Yorkshireman of the stage, a line in which he stood alone and unapproachable. Actors there have been who played the same parts, and with a sufficient mastery of the dialect to pass muster; but, compared with Thompson's, their assumptions were like artificial flowers in a painted vase beside a clump of spring violets in the dew of morning. The semblance was there, but the delicious fragrance of nature's breath it was not theirs to give. The native freshness and out-of-door breezy spirit were Thompson's own and born with him. His engagement was followed by all the known plays in which there was a *Zekiel Homespun* or a *Robin*

Roughhead. I have seen many tragedians and artists in melodrama, many "old men" and light comedians, many funny men and eccentric actors, but I have seen one Yorkshireman only—Lysander Thompson.

There was much interest manifested in this début of Mr. Fisher, for it was well known that Burton had imported him to succeed Lester (Lester Wallack) in light comedy, the latter being about to withdraw to join his father's forces at Wallack's Lyceum; but the most indulgent hope could not expect that the new arrival would cause the audience to forget for a moment the delightful impressions made by the most accomplished light comedian then living. And so it proved. Whatever may have been Fisher's promise in certain directions, his youthful heroes of the stage were not destined to efface the recollections of Mr. Lester; but it was not long before the fiddle of *Triplet* and the cross-garterings of *Malvolio* emancipated him from the bondage of light comedy, revealed his true powers, and made the public grateful to Burton for introducing to New York one of the most artistic comedians of the day.

The second revival of "Twelfth Night" gave Fisher an opportunity. He was cast as *Malvolio*. Blake had previously played it, and, although rather portly for the part, that great actor had given a highly finished performance. But Fisher was born in yellow stockings and cross-gar-

tered, and I believe there will be no question among those who remember the impersonation as to the subtlety of conception, the felicity of portrayal, and fidelity to detail that so eminently distinguished it. From first to last it was a masterpiece. His manner when he interrupts the orgies of *Sir Toby*, the *Clown*, and *Aguecheek*, and during their maudlin mockery, was full of rare suggestiveness; the great scene in the garden, where he falls into the trap set by *Maria*, was one of the finest pieces of acting known to our stage. The audience were as intent during its progress as if their own lives and fortunes hung upon that enigmatic letter. When it comes home to him at last that he indeed is the favored of *Olivia*, and he gives full rein to his fancy respecting his future exaltation—how he must bear himself, the lofty air he will assume, the consideration he will extort—he was inimitable. Already he is clothed in yellow stockings and cross-gartered, and he smiles, as he struts, the smile his deceiver declares so becomes him. In the ensuing scene before *Olivia*, where the stockings and smiles play so important a part, he was equally fine; and if Fisher had played nothing else, his *Malvolio* would remain an interpretation of the highest class and a glory of dramatic art. The press with one accord united in its praise, and Mr. Richard Grant White, whose ability to judge of Shaksperian delineations was well known, confessed, in the columns of the

"Courier and Inquirer," that he did not know where Mr. Fisher learned to play *Malvolio* so well.

✓ And now Fisher's powers were revealed and his ✓ line in a measure ascertained. Yet he continued ✓ to play, during his three seasons at Burton's, many ✓ parts that were not suited to his gifts, but always ✓ playing with earnestness and comprehension, and ✓ always giving satisfaction by his zeal and intelligence. He had a refinement of manner, too, which ✓ made acceptable many a light comedy part for ✓ which he was otherwise unfitted. The instinct of ✓ a gentleman was apparent in all that he did, and ✓ much was pardoned to that captivating spirit. With that spirit he played *Ernest Vane* in the first production of "Masks and Faces," before *Triplet* fell to him by right of artistic conquest. Then occasionally he blossomed out and astonished everybody with some unlooked for revelation of his powers and accomplishments, as in the part of *Sir Valentine May* in Douglas Jerrold's comedy of "St. Cupid," in which character he delighted his audience with a Terpsichorean interlude, a passage at arms, and a surprising performance on the violin. The playbill is a little curious, and I reproduce it from Mr. Laurence Hutton's account of the occasion, given in his interesting sketch of Mr. Fisher, published in the volume known as "Famous Actors of To-Day."

THIS MONDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 14, 1853.

First time in America the new comedy in three acts

By DOUGLAS JERROLD of

“ST. CUPID; OR, DOROTHY’S FORTUNE.”

Sir William Zero HENRY RUSSELL.

(*Under Secretary of State*)

Sir Valentine May CHARLES FISHER.

(*His nephew and secretary*)

In which character he will dance the *Minuet de la Cour* and *Gavotte* with Mrs. Skerrett, execute several *Airs* on the Violin, and go thro’ an *Assault d’Armes* with Mr. Holman.

Dr. Budd TOM JOHNSTON.

(*A country schoolmaster*)

Ensign Bellefleur GEORGE HOLMAN.

(*A Jacobite*)

Checker WILLIAM H. NORTON.

(*A spy employed by Zero*)

Hawke MOSES W. FISK.

(*An official*)

Trundle MR. GOURLAY.

(*Zero’s servant*)

Dorothy Budd MRS. SKERRETT.

Juno, her domestic MISS JANE HILL.

(*A country girl*)

Queen Bee MR. BURTON.

(*A Gipsy woman*)

I quote from Mr. Hutton's lively description of the performance :

Mr. Burton's rendering of a *Queen Bee* was, as may be imagined, exceedingly rich; but the great honors were carried away by Fisher as *St. Cupid*, in white tights, a tunic, gauze wings, a flowing wig, and a simper. His appearance was the signal of great applause from the pit and the gods, increased by his pirouetting with Mrs. Skerrett and his "set to" with Holman, and made perfectly tumultuous when, taking the violin from the leader of the orchestra, John Cooke, he executed the several airs set down for him in the bill. His fiddling, not the least of his accomplishments, was a great and a very pleasant surprise to the audience, and no Ole Bull or Paganini was ever more enthusiastically received or *encored*; six or eight times he returned the instrument to the amused conductor, only to have it handed back to him at the mandates of the dictators in front, until "*St. Cupid*" seemed likely to become nothing more than a violin concert, with Mr. Fisher as sole performer.

This accomplishment was afterwards seen to great advantage in *Triplet*.

As I have said, when "*Masks and Faces*" was first produced at Burton's, Fisher acted *Ernest Vane*. The cast was as follows :

<i>Sir Charles Pomander</i> ..	MR. GEORGE JORDAN.
<i>Mr. Ernest Vane</i>	" CHARLES FISHER.
<i>Colley Cibber</i>	" GEORGE H. BARRETT.
<i>James Quin</i>	" G. H. ANDREWS.
<i>James Triplet</i>	" W. E. BURTON.
<i>Lysimachus Triplet</i>	MASTER CHAS. T. PARSLÖE, JR.

<i>Mr. Soaper</i>	MR. WILLIAM H. NORTON.
<i>Mr. Snarl</i>	" TOM JOHNSTON.
<i>Mrs. Vane</i>	MRS. BUCKLAND.
<i>Peg Woffington</i>	MISS CHARLOTTE MITCHELL.
<i>Kitty Clive</i>	MRS. GEORGE HOLMAN.
<i>Mrs. Triplet</i>	" HOUGH.

It need hardly be said that Burton made a good deal of *Triplet*. It was a sympathetic and appreciative performance, and of course the comic possibilities of the character were entertainingly developed. It might seem to thoughtful observers that Burton unduly forced the comic element, and so robbed the characterization of its pathetic interest; and it is true that Fisher expressed the blended humor and pathos of the part with an artistic delicacy that was not natural to Burton. Noting Fisher's excellence in the part, Burton soon surrendered it, and *Triplet* took its place in Mr. Fisher's gallery with *Malvolio* and *Sir Valentine May*.

I have mentioned that Fisher's acquaintance with the violin was displayed to great advantage in *Triplet*. Mr. Hutton, in the sketch already referred to, dwells upon the happy and touching manner in which the violin appeared as a humanizing influence in his portrayal. As a companion picture I recall the capital scene where *Woffington*, having played Lady Bountiful to the forlorn family, completes her conquest by calling for the fiddle and dancing "Cover the Buckle" to Fisher's inspiring execution,

✓ During Fisher's engagement with Burton he was cast in a variety of parts, and made many friends by the evident sincerity of his performances. This sincerity was a marked trait of his acting, and had a value of its own. It was apparent that here was an actor who was conscientiously striving to do his very best. As time wore on, other traits and graces came into view, all of which denoted artistic progress and suggested much versatile capacity.

The parts played by Mr. Fisher at Burton's would make a long list. I have mentioned *Ernest Vane* and *Triplet*, and also *Malvolio* and *Valentine May*. In Burton's revivals of "The Tempest," "A Midsummer Night's Dream," and "The Merry Wives" he was cast respectively as *Prospero*, *Theseus*, and *Page*—many years afterwards, when one of Augustin Daly's company, he essayed *Sir John Falstaff* in "The Wives." He had then ripened ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ into an experienced and resourceful comedian. As *Prospero*, in "The Tempest," he was most acceptable in dignity and authority, and as *Theseus*, in "Midsummer Night's Dream," he gave to the part a royal demeanor with a touch of sentiment. ✓ His delivery of the poetry was full of feeling, and ✓ I remember the glowing enthusiasm with which he spoke the eloquent lines descriptive of his famous hounds:

"My hounds are bred out of the Spartan kind,
So flew'd, so sanded; and their heads are hung

With ears that sweep away the morning dew;
Crook-kneed, and dew-lapped like Thessalian bulls;
Slow in pursuit, but match'd in mouth like bells,
Each under each. A cry more tunable
Was never holloa'd to, nor cheered with horn,
In Crete, in Sparta, nor in Thessaly:
Judge when you hear."

He was also seen in many of the old and standard comedies—*Captain Absolute*, in "The Rivals"; *Joseph Surface*, in "The School for Scandal"; *Dick Dowlas*, in "The Heir at Law"; *Charles Torrens* and *Captain Maguire*, in "The Serious Family"; and many others. Among original parts might be mentioned *Black Jack*, in "Janet Pride," and *Richard Haughty*, in "The Fox Hunt"; he also played *Dymond*, in "Heart of Gold," and *Jacob Kindly*, in the "Upper Ten and Lower Twenty." After leaving Burton in 1855 he played at the Broadway, supporting the various stars that appeared there, acquitting himself most creditably in a round of varied parts, showing notable talent and constantly adding to his sum of knowledge and experience.

He joined Burton's forces again in 1856, at his new theatre, playing old parts and new ones, among the last *Jesse Rural*, in "Old Heads and Young Hearts." In following years he played at Niblo's and at Laura Keene's theatre, and then, in 1861, came to Wallack's, where he remained for ten years.

These ten years were fruitful in opportunities for advancement and artistic achievement, and Mr. Fisher made the most of them. On that famous stage he was associated with such artists as Lester Wallack, John Gilbert, William Rufus Blake, Mrs. Hoey and Mrs. Vernon, and it soon became evident that he was worthy to be ranked with those high-class performers. The audiences speedily recognized the sincerity and fine quality of his portrayals, and as speedily he won the admiring esteem of theatre-goers who were accustomed to the best. His name was linked with that of Lester Wallack and John Gilbert as a trio of unsurpassed excellence, and to witness the acting of three such artists was a treat indeed.

As time went on, Fisher ripened in conception and execution, until his faculties were completely under his command, so that, within his limitations, each character he essayed became a finished picture. The refinement of manner I have particularized was still a characteristic of his acting; humorous and even rollicking episodes were treated with conspicuous delicacy. And it may be said here that Mr. Fisher's capacity for the expression of humor was very much greater than most people supposed. He was not given to comic extravagance, but he had a keen appreciation of mirthful effect, and knew how to indicate and support a humorous situation, and to duly emphasize the points of ludicrous meaning. But what he did was thought-pro-

voking as well as mirth-provoking, and was suggestive rather than broadly rendered. In *Malvolio*, for example, he never was tempted to farcical abandon, even when cross-gartered and wearing the self-deluded smile. Throughout he maintained his dignified self-importance. When he read the letter in the garden you were amused at the trap into which he had fallen, but you condemned the trap as much as you ridiculed the victim. The humor of the situation was so delicately shaded that you felt like excusing his presumption. This is perhaps another way of saying that Fisher did not buffoon the part. He might have stirred the risibilities more, but he was judicious and his humor was pathetic. It was the same with *Triplet*. He had studied the part closely, and he knew its pathos, its sentiment and its humor. He played it naturally and consistently, and with a due regard to the character's peculiarities and environment. The humor was brought out subtly and delicately, but was none the less humor for being quietly and almost unconsciously rendered.

While at Wallack's, Fisher played many parts, and widely extended his repertory. He appeared in most of the comedies and dramas produced at that famous house, and was the original in numerous characters. Mr. Hutton, already quoted, gives with characteristic diligence the following valuable list: "He was the first *George D'Alroy* in Robertson's 'Caste' at Wallack's, to the *Esther* of Rose

Eytinge, May 3, 1869; the original *Beau Farintosh* in 'School' during the same season; the original *Arthur Mompesson* in 'Progress,' the original *Prince Perovsky* in 'Ours,' and the original *Tom Styles* in 'Society.' He created *Gilbert Featherstone* in 'Lost in London,' *Rawlings* in 'Lost at Sea,' *Dr. Bland* in 'Bosom Friends,' *Father Malone* in 'Shamus O'Brien,' *Tom Robinson* in 'Never Too Late To Mend,' *Tom Sutherland* in 'The Favorite of Fortune,' *Mr. Davis* in 'Flying Scud,' *Matthew Leigh* in 'Rosedale,' *Digby Grant* in 'The Two Roses,' *Bowles* in 'Coquette,' *Lawyer Goodwin* in 'Minnie's Luck,' *Brackenbury* in 'Pure Gold,' *Didier* in 'The Fast Family,' *Rawdon Scudamore* in 'Hunted Down,' *Dick Hartley* in 'How She Loves Him,' the *Major* in 'Henry Dunbar,' *Colonel Epee* in 'The Lancers,' *Robert Redburn* in 'The Lancashire Lass,' and *Randall* in 'Randall's Thumb'—truly a wide range and showing unusual versatility. Mr. Hutton thinks Mr. Fisher made a mistake in leaving Wallack's, and very likely he did, for the association must have been as congenial and agreeable as it had been long, and it does not seem that he bettered his professional standing by making a change. Be that as it may, he ceased to be a member of the company in June, 1872, and took his leave of Wallack's stage on July 20 in the same year, playing *Noah Learoyd* in "The Long Strike."

His next engagement was with Augustin Daly

at the Fifth Avenue Theatre, where he opened as *Old Dornton*, in "The Road to Ruin," October 28, 1872. This impersonation revived recollections of Blake and Gilbert in the character, and it was the opinion of critics that Fisher's effort, though most meritorious, was not equal to that of either. However near he may have approached Gilbert, I can well believe that he fell short with respect to Blake. That great actor had been dead some years, but the memory of his *Old Dornton* could not be charmed away even by Gilbert.

Fisher was esteemed a valuable addition to Mr. Daly's force, and his abilities were displayed in parts suited to his gifts and others not so congenial, with now and then a more ambitious venture. Not long after "The Road to Ruin" one of these ventures occurred in the production of "The Merry Wives of Windsor," Fisher playing *Falstaff* for the first time. I made a passing reference to the fact in the early part of my sketch. The comedy was presented on November 19, 1872. The cast was as follows:

<i>Sir John Falstaff</i>	CHARLES FISHER.
<i>Fenton</i>	B. T. RINGGOLD.
<i>Shallow</i>	D. WHITING.
<i>Slender</i>	JAMES LEWIS.
<i>Ford</i>	GEORGE CLARKE.
<i>Page</i>	LOUIS JAMES.
<i>William Page</i>	MISS JENNIE YEAMANS.
<i>Sir Hugh Evans</i>	WILLIAM DAVIDGE.

<i>Host of the Garter Inn</i>	OWEN FAWCETT.
<i>Dr. Caius</i>	W. J. LE MOYNE.
<i>Bardolph</i>	J. A. MACKEY.
<i>Pistol</i>	GEORGE DE VERE.
<i>Nym</i>	J. H. BURNETT.
<i>Robin</i>	MISS GERTY NORWOOD.
<i>Simple</i>	WILLIAM BEEKMAN.
<i>Mistress Ford</i>	MISS FANNY DAVENPORT.
<i>Mistress Page</i>	" FANNY MORANT.
<i>Mistress Anne Page</i>	" SARA JEWETT.
<i>Mistress Quickly</i>	MRS. G. H. GILBERT.

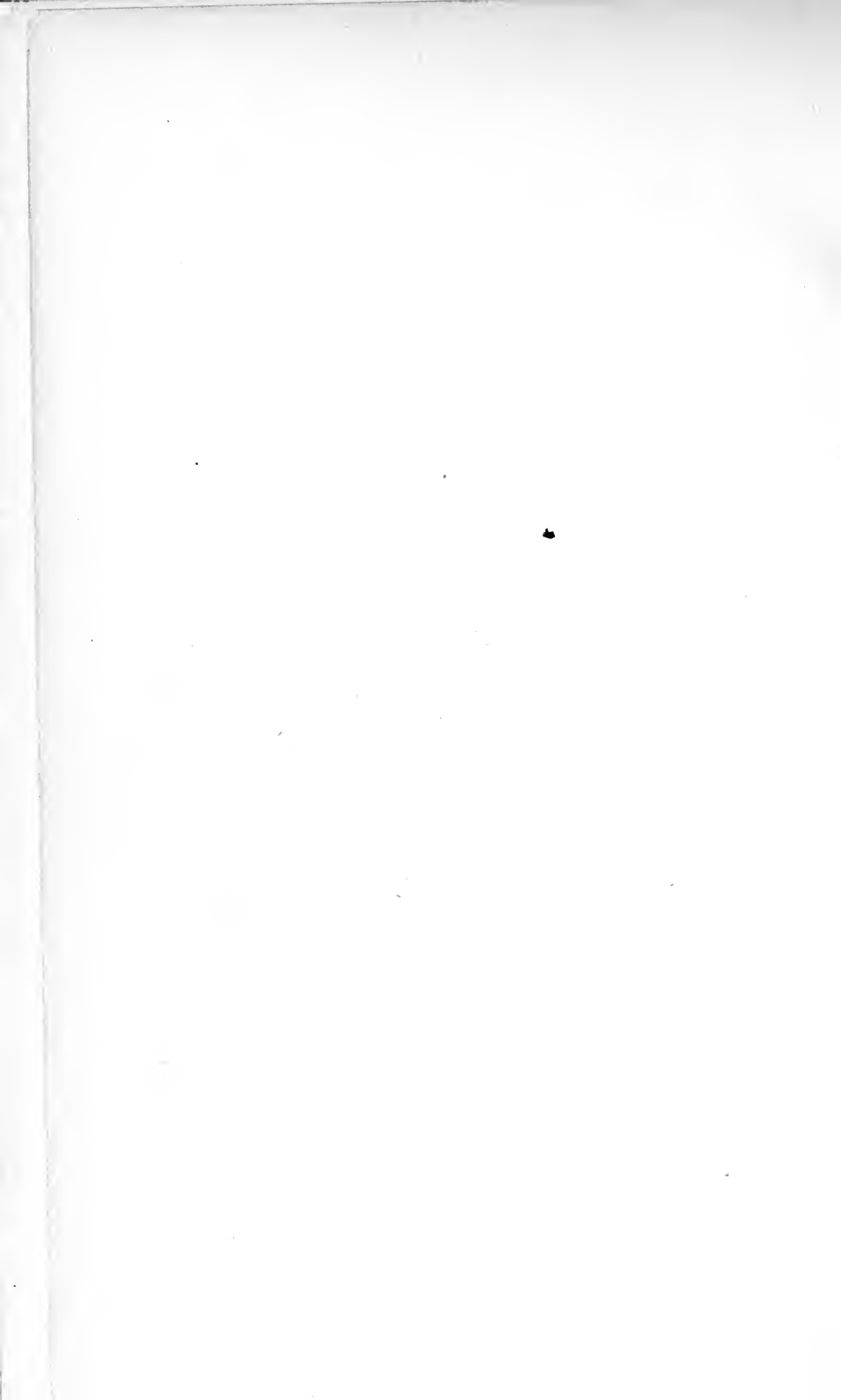
The revival was a distinct success, and was generally well acted, as it could hardly fail to be with so striking a distribution. Of course critical interest centred on Fisher's performance of *Sir John*, and that it was intelligently conceived and denoted careful and thoughtful study and was appreciatively executed there was no question. The actor was not likely to do anything else. Whatever the shortcoming, it was owing to Mr. Fisher's nature. It was not in him to depict easily the ingrained coarseness of the knight, and to simulate his vices and repelling characteristics. He could portray the braggart and sack-drinker and deliver his wit, but he could not abandon himself with unction to his gross propensities.

Fisher continued to play at Daly's for some years, and was seen in a round of important parts, such as *Sir Peter Teazle*, *Polonius*, *Triplet*, and others, also in the manager's Shaksperian revivals, and likewise in the succession of plays pro-

duced for the display of Miss Ada Rehan's abilities, in which his ripe art made him a distinguished support. The years were telling upon him, however, and his appearances became fewer and fewer, each one showing his increasing feebleness. He retired from the stage in 1890, his last performance being *Adam* in "As You Like It." He died in New York on the 11th of June, 1891.

CHARLES FISHER will be remembered as a sterling comedian who acted always acceptably, and in a certain round of parts won unqualified distinction. He was painstaking and sincere in all that he did, and his performances throughout were informed by a high intelligence. In his light comedy assumptions, wherein he was conscious of his limitations, he acted with the same earnestness that animated his masterpieces. His masterpieces were revelations of felicitous conception and execution, and are worthy to be ranked among the finest artistic portrayals of our time. It is a great satisfaction to lovers of the stage that its history is graced by the record of delineations so admirable.

The personality of Mr. Fisher was interesting and charming. There was something knightly in his bearing, and his voice always carried with it a ring of tuneful fervor. I know not how he may have impressed others, but whenever I saw him I felt that I was in the presence of a refined spirit and a noble, true-hearted gentleman.



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY
BERKELEY

Return to desk from which borrowed.
This book is DUE on the last date stamped below.

201-1454

JUL 19 1972 67
6

104p'52WB

REC'D LD

JAN 10 1961

JAN 16 1966 77

REC'D

JAN 6 '66 - 12 AM

LOAN DEPT.

REC'D LD

JUL

7 '72 - 11 AM 7
4

LD 21-100m-9,'48(B399s16)476

M170486

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY

